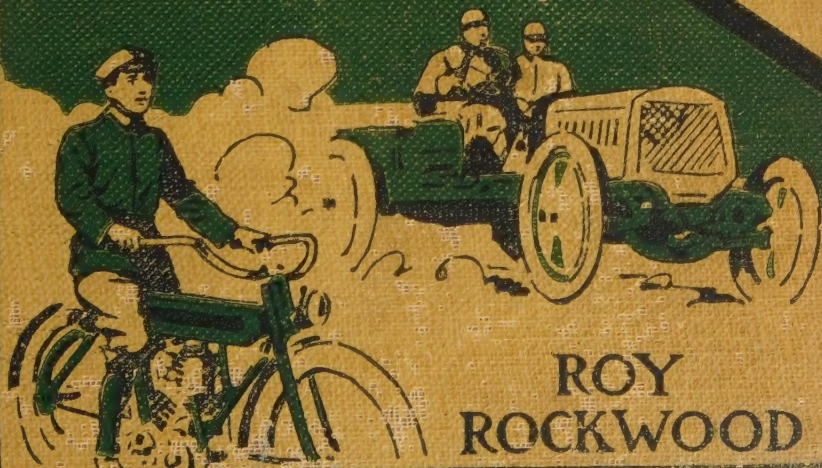
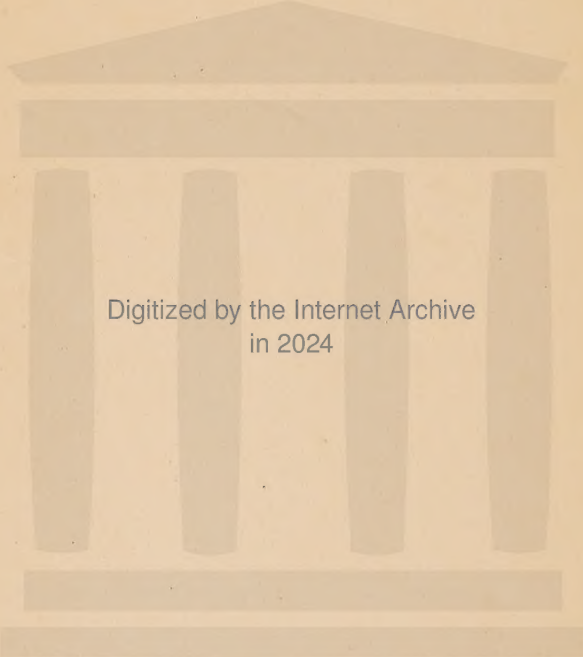




THE  
SPEEDWELL  
BOYS  
AND  
THEIR  
POWER LAUNCH

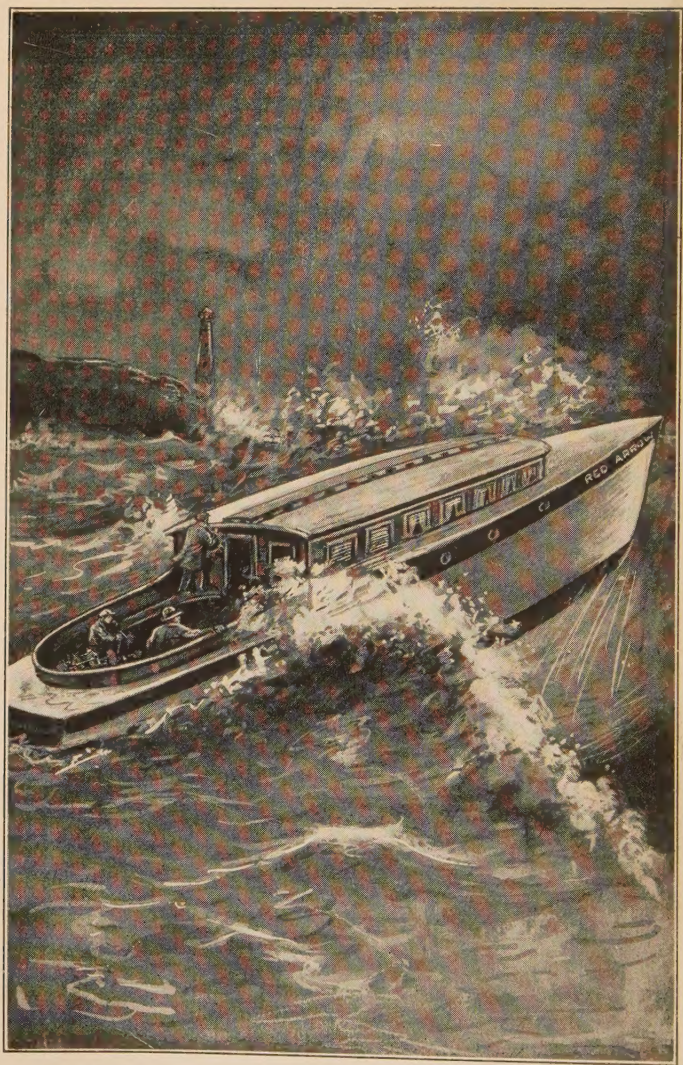


ROY  
ROCKWOOD



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024





THE LAUNCH RODE THESE GREAT ROLLERS SPLENDIDLY.  
*Speedwell Boys and their Power Launch*

# The Speedwell Boys and Their Power Launch

Or

To the Rescue of the Castaways

BY

ROY ROCKWOOD

AUTHOR OF "THE SPEEDWELL BOYS ON MOTORCYCLES," "THE  
DAVE DASHAWAY SERIES," "THE GREAT  
MARVEL SERIES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK  
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS

# **BOOKS FOR BOYS**

**BY ROY ROCKWOOD**

## **THE SPEEDWELL BOYS SERIES**

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

THE SPEEDWELL BOYS ON MOTOR-  
CYCLES  
THE SPEEDWELL BOYS AND THEIR  
RACING AUTO  
THE SPEEDWELL BOYS AND THEIR  
POWER LAUNCH  
THE SPEEDWELL BOYS IN A SUB-  
MARINE

## **DAVE DASHAWAY SERIES**

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

DAVE DASHAWAY THE YOUNG AVI-  
ATOR  
DAVE DASHAWAY AND HIS HYDRO-  
PLANE  
DAVE DASHAWAY AND HIS GIANT  
AIRSHIP  
DAVE DASHAWAY AROUND THE  
WORLD

## **THE GREAT MARVEL SERIES**

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.

THROUGH THE AIR TO THE NORTH  
POLE  
UNDER THE OCEAN TO THE SOUTH  
POLE  
FIVE THOUSAND MILES UNDER-  
GROUND  
THROUGH SPACE TO MARS  
LOST ON THE MOON

CUPPLES & LEON CO. PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

Copyrighted 1913, by  
CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

THE SPEEDWELL BOYS AND THEIR POWER LAUNCH

## CONTENTS

| CHAPTER                                    | PAGE |
|--|------|
| I. THE MARK OF THE HORSESHOE . . . . .     | 1    |
| II. THE MYSTERY . . . . .                  | 11   |
| III. THE RED ARROW . . . . .               | 19   |
| IV. THE MAN IN THE STRIPED SHIRT . . . . . | 27   |
| V. DEEP IN TROUBLE . . . . .               | 35   |
| VI. TWO MEN MISSING . . . . .              | 41   |
| VII. THE NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION . . . . .  | 47   |
| VIII. THE RACE . . . . .                   | 56   |
| IX. THE SINKING BOAT . . . . .             | 65   |
| X. A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT . . . . .      | 74   |
| XI. NEW YEAR'S EVE . . . . .               | 81   |
| XII. THE REGATTA . . . . .                 | 89   |
| XIII. THE WINNING SPURT . . . . .          | 99   |
| XIV. WILD MAN'S ISLAND . . . . .           | 107  |
| XV. IN THE FOG . . . . .                   | 115  |
| XVI. WHO CUT THE HAWSER? . . . . .         | 121  |
| XVII. THE FOOTPRINT IN THE SAND . . . . .  | 129  |
| XVIII. THE MYSTERY OF THE ISLAND . . . . . | 136  |
| XIX. THE WIRELESS MESSAGE . . . . .        | 147  |
| XX. TO THE RESCUE! . . . . .               | 154  |

## CONTENTS

| CHAPTER                             | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| XXI. THE LANDING . . . . .          | 165  |
| XXII. IN THE CAVES . . . . .        | 172  |
| XXIII. THE TRAIL OF THE CASTAWAYS . | 180  |
| XXIV. THE WILD MAN . . . . .        | 188  |
| XXV. THE MYSTERY CLEARED UP . .     | 198  |

# THE SPEEDWELL BOYS AND THEIR POWER LAUNCH

## CHAPTER I

### THE MARK OF THE HORSESHOE

THE repeated mellow notes of a motor car horn announced the approach of a swiftly-traveling auto along the road; but a curve in the Colasha River, and a bend in the road, hid the vehicle for a moment.

The sound of voices accompanied the automobile—the voices of both girls and boys.

“Oh! isn’t the river lovely from this spot!” cried someone. “Dan! slow down here, do, that’s a good boy!”

“We ought to stop here and just drink in this scene!” declared a second enthusiastic and unmistakably feminine voice.

“Hope there’s something eatable goes with that drink,” put in a gruffer tone. “I could do something to a ham sandwich.”

“Great Scott, Dan!” suddenly ejaculated a boy’s excited voice. “There’s that red launch again!”

At the moment the car came around the bend in the road, a drab-painted Breton-Melville car,

## 2 SPEEDWELLS' POWER LAUNCH

with beautiful lines, but very plainly furnished. There were two boys on the front seat, the one at the steering wheel some sixteen years of age, while the sturdy fellow beside him might have been a year or two older.

In the tonneau sat a third boy with three pretty girls. One of these, a vivacious, jolly-looking little lady, with hair on the order of the sunrise color, said to the boy who sat facing her:

"Is that the power launch you were telling us about, Billy? That one down there with the red stripe around its hull?"

"That's the craft," replied Billy Speedwell. "And believe me she's some boat for traveling when she gets up speed. Isn't that so, Dan?" He referred to his older brother who was acting as chauffeur, and who had now brought the motor car to an easy stop.

"We saw it running the rapids at Massett's Landing," said Dan Speedwell. "The spray fanned out from the bows for twenty feet, and she cut the waves like a shark. Oh, she is a speedy craft, all right."

"And you'd like to own her, Dannie!" laughed Mildred Kent, the black-haired, blue-eyed girl who had first suggested stopping.

"Come on," said the hungry boy, hopping out of the car. "If we're going to picnic here, let's get at it."

"Biff says he is starving," remarked the third girl, Maybell Turner by name. "He looks to be in a dreadfully savage state—so savage that his necktie has got twisted around under his ear."

"You'd better feed me pretty quick, then," said Fred Hardy, otherwise "Biff." "I'm neither accountable for neckties nor anything else when the inner man is rasped. Seems to me I haven't eaten for a week."

"And we've only come thirty miles!" cried Mildred. "If you had accompanied Dan and Billy on that thousand mile endurance test, and traveled three hundred miles in ten hours without stopping for meals, you would certainly have only been fit to cage."

"I guess they ate some on the way," growled Biff.

"But what fun and excitement you two boys must have had!" cried the red haired Miss Lettie Parker.

"If Chance Avery had had his way, they'd have had more excitement than was good for them," said Biff.

"What did he really do to you, Billy?" asked Lettie.

But before Billy could answer her (these two were always "scrapping" in a more or less friendly way) Mildred Kent said:

"I know that Burton Poole and Mr. Avery

#### 4 SPEEDWELLS' POWER LAUNCH

are not friends now. They were partners in that race, and Avery said beforehand that they were sure to win."

"They didn't even come in second, or third," scoffed Billy. "They were only among the 'also rans.' "

"But that isn't why Burton closed up accounts with Chanceford Avery, I'm sure," declared Lettie, shaking her curls.

"Avery did not act the part of a gentleman," said Dan Speedwell, with gravity. "But the less said, the soonest mended. We haven't got to worry over Chance just now."

"You may have to see more of him if you go in for a motor boat," observed Hardy, watching the girls spread the cloth on the tonneau seat and set out the food from the lunch basket.

"How's that?" demanded Billy Speedwell, quickly. "You don't mean to say that he owns a launch?"

"No, no! But he's joined the Colasha Boat Club. A lot of fellows belong who couldn't even afford to own a twenty-foot cat-boat."

"No 'white wings' in mine," said Billy, his mouth full. "Get down in the bay somewhere and find yourself becalmed all night."

"An auxiliary engine's all right," remarked Biff.

"But a motor boat's better. Then you're not

waiting on wind or tide much." He cast a longing glance down the steep bank to where the power craft with the red stripe around her hull was moored to a stake at the water's edge. "I'd like to go aboard of her," Billy said.

"Where's her crew?" asked Miss Turner.

"Never saw but one man in her," said Dan, thoughtfully. "She must be easy to handle."

"Who is he?" asked Mildred Kent, curiously.

"Give it up," replied Dan. "Nobody seems to know. He doesn't belong to the Colasha Club."

"*'Red Arrow'*," repeated Biff, slowly, reading the name painted upon her sharp prow. "She looks like she could scoot some, too."

"You ought to see her under way," said Billy, with a sigh. "I'd rather go off on her for a trip than—than eat another piece of Lettie's fine cake!"

"Ha!" cried that young lady. "You'd be a fine sailor, you would. A wild and free life you're longing for, Billy Speedwell."

"That's right! Think of the adventures a fellow could have."

"You'd live a regular 'Treasure Island' story, wouldn't you?" went on the red-haired girl, while the others laughed. "With your 'Yo, ho, ho!'" she added.

"That's all right, Reddy," returned Billy,

patronizingly. "Just because it makes you seasick to walk over the Long Bridge, is no reason why other folk wouldn't be good sailors."

"I do enjoy your flights of rhetoric so much, Billy," gibed Miss Parker. "And your grammar!"

"A feller doesn't have to be a grammarian to know how to sail a boat," grunted her friend.

"You'd never learn to be a sailor, grammar or no," declared Lettie. "And, anyway, I expect that I shall sail the 'deep blue sea' long before you get even a smell of the salt breeze, Billy-boy."

"How's that?"

"And Mildred, too? Won't we, Mildred?" continued Lettie, tantalizingly.

"If father and Mr. Parker finally decide to take us all south at Easter," explained Mildred Kent. "We hope they will."

"Oh!" cried Miss Turner, "on that trip of the steamer Orville to the Bermudas?"

"Yes," broke in Lettie, "and we shall certainly have a glorious time. Pooh, Billy!" she added, with scorn, "what's your little old launch beside a fine big steamship?"

"Give me the launch," said Billy.

"I reckon nobody will give us that launch," observed Dan, still gazing at the beautifully varnished boat below the roadway.

"Let's go down and take a look at it!" cried

Biff, who, having eaten to repletion, was eager for something new.

Fred Hardy worked faithfully all the week in the Darringford Machine Shops, and this was his Saturday afternoon holiday. He was enjoying it to the full, for he was not often invited on an automobile ride. Although he was a member of the Riverdale Outing Club, as were all the others of this picnic party, he could only afford to ride a bicycle himself. And some of those members who owned motorcycles, and automobiles, were inclined to look down upon the mechanic's son.

Not so the Speedwell brothers, however. In the first place, Dan and Billy were sons of a poor man themselves. Mr. Speedwell owned a small dairy farm just outside of Riverdale, and the two brothers had to deliver the bottled milk to Mr. Speedwell's customers every morning in the year.

Dan and Billy were hard-working boys, and they won their time for outings by faithful application both to their tasks and to their books. Their possession of a racing automobile—and of their motorcycles, as well—had come about through fortuitous circumstances that are told of in the first volume of this series, entitled, "The Speedwell Boys on Motorcycles; Or, The Mystery of a Great Conflagration." Mr. Speedwell could not have afforded to buy either a car, or motorcycles for his sons.

Dan and Billy, by their own efforts and pluck, had been able to obtain this fast Breton-Melville car, and in the second volume of the series, entitled "The Speedwell Boys and Their Racing Auto; Or, A Run for the Golden Cup," are narrated the particulars of the great race which they won.

"We can't climb down there," objected Maybell, in answer to Hardy's suggestion. "We'll get our frocks torn."

"Oh, pshaw! thats just like girls!" cried Billy, impolitely. "If I was a girl I'd dress in a gunny-sack."

"I expect you would!" exclaimed Lettie Parker, tossing her head of curls. "A nice looking girl you'd make, Billy Speedwell."

"Let's take a nearer squint at that *Red Arrow*, Billy," proposed Hardy. "I don't believe there's anybody aboard."

"Rather a lonely place for a fellow to leave his launch moored," said Billy, looking up and down the river bank as he followed Hardy to the water's edge. "Where do you suppose the man's gone?"

"Give it up. Do you know him when you see him?"

"He's got bushy black whiskers. That's all Dan and I could see of him when he was going through those rapids at Massett's."

They came to the edge of the bank, which was sheer at this point; there being no beach.

There was a padlock on the chain by which the launch was fastened to the heavy stake, or spile, driven into the bank. One might have leaped aboard the craft.

But while the boys hesitated, there was a sound from the craft that startled them. It was a deep sigh—almost a groan. It came from the cabin of the launch.

The craft floated broadside to them, because of the set of the current. The cabin windows nearest them were shaded by slat-blinds. But, farther along, there was one blind pulled up only half-way.

"He's there," whispered Billy, and pulled Fred Hardy's sleeve. But the latter tiptoed along the bank, trying to see into the cabin over this blind. Billy, curious likewise, followed.

The man must have been lying on a couch under the window. He sighed again—whether in his sleep, or otherwise, the boys did not know—and one of his hands appeared above the blind.

It was a huge, hairy hand, and as it gripped convulsively the edge of the shutter, the back of it was exposed. Fred Hardy uttered a suppressed cry and Billy himself was startled. On the back of the broad hand was a livid scar—the exact impression, it seemed, of a horseshoe.

## 10 SPEEDWELLS' POWER LAUNCH

"What do you know about that?" whispered Billy, his eyes round with surprise. "Did you ever see the like——"

"Sh! come away," urged Biff, already retreating.

Billy tagged behind, demanding to know what his friend meant.

"Let's get out of here," said Hardy again. "We don't want that fellow to see us. Don't say anything before the girls, Billy, but I believe I know who that man is."

"Mebbe you do," grumbled Billy; "but I don't."

"You saw that scar?" demanded Hardy.

"That's what I did."

"Well, there's a convict at Meadville—or there ought to be—whose hand is marked in that very same way. He is a desperate criminal. My father happened to see the mark of the horseshoe burned on the man's hand."

"And you think he has escaped and is cruising up and down Colasha River on a fine gasoline launch?" asked Billy, in doubt.

"I don't know. But it seems suspicious to me. After we've taken the girls home, I'll tell you and Dan," promised Hardy. "Don't say anything more about it now."

## CHAPTER II

### THE MYSTERY

DAN was already cranking up when his brother and Biff Hardy reached the automobile.

"What were you boys afraid of down there?" asked Lettie Parker, smartly. "Is there a ghost—or a savage dog—aboard that launch?"

"By the sounds, I should call it a dog," replied Billy, carelessly. "It was sort of a growl we heard. But maybe the man was only snoring."

"Then the owner of the launch was at home?" observed Mildred Kent.

"I guess so. He snored loud enough to own two launches," returned Billy. "All right, Dan?"

"Jump aboard, boy," said his brother, getting into the chauffeur's place himself. "Remember, we've got thirty miles to go before we can land these ladies at their own doors. Then we've the milk to pick up."

Billy sat beside his brother for the return run to Riverdale. And for a part of the way he drove

the car himself. The younger Speedwell was a less cautious chauffeur than Dan; but the roads were good and they met with no accident.

Meanwhile Hardy made himself agreeable to the girls in the tonneau; but after the girls had all left the car at Mildred's, volubly thanking the Speedwells for the ride, Biff signified his intention of riding farther with the brothers.

"I'll go around to the dairies with you," he said, "and then walk home this evening."

"I guess we can get you back all right—and will be glad to have you come along," returned Dan, cordially. Yet he showed that he was puzzled a little.

"Dan's wise to the fact that there's something on your mind, Biff," said Billy. "Better unburden yourself."

"All right then. Slow down a little so you can hear me. It's about that man in the launch, Dan."

"The fellow who runs her?" asked the older Speedwell. "The man with the beard?"

"I reckon so," said Billy, quickly. "But all we saw was his hand. That had hair enough on it to prove that he grew heavy whiskers, though."

"If it is, he's the same fellow you boys saw before," added Biff.

"Well, what about him?"

"I don't know," said Billy, quickly. "It's

Biff that's to tell the story. All I saw was the hairy hand, and a scar on it."

"A scar on his hand?" asked Dan, puzzled.

"Just as though a horseshoe had been stamped on the back of it," his brother said. "A livid scar."

Dan looked from one to the other of his companions in further doubt.

"That man must have an awfully big hand," he finally said. "A horseshoe on it!"

"It was really made by a mule's shoe," said Biff Hardy, decidedly.

"Hullo!" cried Dan. "You know all about it, do you?"

"I think so."

"You know the man, then?"

"I reckon I know who he is," said Biff.

"And you ought to hear him tell it!" cried Billy. "Go ahead, Biff—astonish him as you did me."

"Why, I believe that the man in that launch is a prisoner escaped from the Meadville penitentiary," said Hardy, quietly. "He is convict nine hundred and forty-seven."

"For goodness sake!" ejaculated Dan. "A prisoner running a handsome gasoline launch like that! Why, Biff, it's hardly believable."

"I won't say this is the man; but I'll tell you what my father told me, and then you can judge

yourself regarding the scar that both Billy and I saw on this man's hand. You see, there wouldn't be two men with the marks of a horseshoe on the back of their left hands unless one had the wound made deliberately."

"I guess that's right," admitted Billy.

"It isn't any pretty sight," said Biff, "so I guess this fellow in the launch didn't have it put on him for a fancy ornament."

Dan chuckled. "Go ahead with your yarn," he said. "Nobody's doubting your word."

"Well, father worked in Flemming & Thaw's blacksmith and wheelwright shop on the Meadville road, two years ago. You know—before he went to work for the Darringfords and got me a job there, too. That Meadville road was being constructed by prison gangs. One day the guards brought in a new man—a fellow who had only been a short time in the place and who had chosen to work with the road gang rather than to stay idle in his cell. You know, they have that choice.

"The official blacksmith had fitted his ankle irons too tight. The guard asked father to cut them and weld them on again. While he was doing this one of the other men was shoeing a mule nearby.

"The convict sat on the dirt floor of the shop, his feet sprawled out before him, and the palms of his hands braced on the ground. His hands

were big, broad, hairy, hands—father said he'd seldom seen a man with such powerful-looking hands.

"While the prisoner was in this position, the man making the mule's shoes whirled a white-hot one out of the fire and slapped it down on his anvil. In some way he loosened the grip of the tongs and the little shoe spun across the shop and landed squarely upon the back of the prisoner's left hand!"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Billy.

"That was fierce!" said Dan.

"It was pretty tough for number nine hundred and forty-seven," agreed Hardy. "He was laid up with a sore hand for some time, I reckon. Father saw him working on the road, however, after the burn was healed. The entire shape of the mule's shoe showed on the back of his hand; it went in so deeply that nothing would ever hide it——"

"But a glove?" finished Billy.

"I reckon that's so. These 'beauty doctors' that you read about wouldn't be able to do much for that fellow," agreed Biff Hardy.

"And you think, Fred, that this fellow in the *Red Arrow* is the same man?" Dan asked.

"Why, Dan! we both saw the scar!" cried Billy.

"But, if the man is still in prison?"

"It stands to reason that he can't be!" declared Hardy.

"That is a fact—providing this man on the launch is he," admitted Dan.

"But, two men with horseshoe scars just alike? Ridiculous!" cried Hardy.

"Quite ridiculous, I grant you," said the older Speedwell. "But we don't know that a convict has escaped from the Meadville prison."

"Let's find out!" cried Billy. "Maybe one has and there's a reward offered for his capture."

"Billy!" exclaimed his brother. "I am afraid you have formed a bad habit."

"What habit?" demanded Billy, knowing that Dan was joking him.

"You've helped to capture two sets of bad men, and you expect to go right on doing that to the end of time, eh?"

"And thinking he'll get a reward for it, too," chuckled Biff Hardy.

"Aw—well," began Billy, when his brother interrupted by saying:

"There's one thing sure, fellows. We can easily find out whether number nine hundred and forty-seven is at Meadville, or not. We can ask."

"Fine!" cried Billy Speedwell. "We can drive over there and inquire next week."

"All right," Dan rejoined. "We'll do that."

But I guess there's a mistake somewhere. They don't let inmates raise beards in prison, and this fellow had a big one the very first time we saw him in the launch."

"That was at least a fortnight ago," murmured Billy.

"And for an escaped prisoner to run up and down the Colasha River in a power launch—what do you think of that?" scoffed his brother.

"It doesn't look sensible, I allow," grumbled Hardy. "But you can't get over that scar."

The next week, while the Speedwells were running up and down the river road in their racing car, they frequently saw the *Red Arrow* shooting down or up the current. Nobody but the black-whiskered man seemed to be aboard.

On the following Saturday Dan and Billy ran to Barnegat, and coming back they took the shell road which followed the windings of the bay shore. It was a highway not so much traveled by automobiles, for the more direct road cut off at least ten miles of the distance between Barnegat and Riverdale.

The shell road touched all the little fishing villages and stations along the shore. They were seldom out of sight of the bay.

At one place Dan and Billy sighted a launch near an abandoned wharf. There wasn't a habitation in sight of the place, and even the fish

houses had fallen into decay. It was a lonely cove.

"Isn't that the *Red Arrow* being worked in there?" demanded Billy.

There was no mistaking the gasoline launch with the red stripe around her hull.

"What's happened her?" cried Dan. "He's propelling her in with an oar."

It was true that the black-whiskered man was sculling his craft into the ruined dock. The boys slowed down their auto to watch him. When the nose of the *Red Arrow* touched the wharf the man ran forward, leaped ashore with a line, and made her fast.

Then he hurried up the pier, waving his hand to the Speedwells.

"Hold on, Dan!" murmured Billy. "Let's see what he wants. And you can take a squint at that scar on his hand, too."

Dan stopped the car at the head of the wharf.

## CHAPTER III

### THE "RED ARROW"

THE apparent owner of the handsome power launch was a tall, narrow shouldered person with a crop of stiff black hair on his head, like the bristles of a shoe-brush, and a bushy beard which covered a goodly portion of his countenance. He wore eyeglasses and looked to be rather a scholarly man—not at all like either a yachtman or an escaped prisoner.

He was well-dressed, wore a blue cap without a band, and—his left hand was gloved. Billy and Dan glanced covertly at each other. If the back of that gloved hand bore the scar of the burning horseshoe, they could not see it.

"I say, boys, have you a spare can of gasoline?" asked the launch owner, quickly. "I made a mistake when I left Barnegat; my supply is standing on the dock there. I knew my tank was low, too. Now she has gone dead, the tide is setting in, and it will take me hours to work her back to where I left my gas."

The Speedwells generally carried a spare five-

gallon can of the fluid. They had learned that, in running about the country, one can never be sure of striking a gasoline supply station just at the time the fuel is needed.

"Yes, sir! we can let you have enough to take you back to Barnegat," Dan replied, after a glance at Billy for his acquiescence. "She doesn't burn much, does she?"

"She's the cheapest running craft of her size on the bay, I believe," said her owner, with some enthusiasm. "And she runs as though charmed."

"We've noticed her a good bit," Billy interposed, while Dan got out to unlash the can. "She certainly can travel, that *Red Arrow*!"

"I guess you're interested in boating?" asked the bewhiskered man.

"I guess we are!" cried the younger Speedwell boy, with enthusiasm. "Dan and I hope to get a launch some day. It must be great sport to go scooting up and down Colasha River when you please."

"Yes, it is good sport," agreed the man. "And this launch of mine is perfectly seaworthy. I wouldn't be afraid to coast to Florida in her in the mild season. I believe a launch of her build, and no larger, has been worked as far as the Bermudas in perfect safety."

"Think of that, Dan!" cried Billy. "Wouldn't that be great? To the Bermudas—just as long

a trip as the Parkers and Kents are going to take this winter."

"But one would better choose mild weather to sail for the Summer Islands," laughed the stranger. "Can you spare this whole can, young man?"

"Yes, sir," said Dan. "I'll carry it aboard for you."

"Thank you. Come on, won't you, son?" he added, turning to Billy. "I'd like to show you the *Red Arrow*."

Billy was only too delighted. And Dan was not a little curious to see the craft more closely. They went aboard, while the launch owner emptied the can of gasoline and paid Dan for it. Then he showed them the points of the *Red Arrow* and her furnishings.

She was large enough to offer comfortable accommodations for a dozen persons for a short voyage. She was finished in oiled hard wood, and had many conveniences that the Speedwells had never seen on a launch of her character. Altogether they were delighted with the *Red Arrow* and Billy could not say too much in praise of it.

"How fast can she travel?" queried Dan.

"She can do her twenty nautical miles with ease," said the man, smiling.

"Twenty knots an hour!" cried Billy.

"Easily."

"My!" exclaimed the boy. "I'd like a spin in her."

"Well, my boy, I don't see why that should be impossible," said the owner of the *Red Arrow*, laughing. "You boys are welcome, any day, to a ride with me."

"Thank you very much, sir," interposed Dan. "But, you see, we don't have every day free."

"Of course not! You attend school?"

"The Riverdale Academy," said Dan. "Besides, father sells milk in the town and we have to deliver it before school opens and have a good many chores to do at night. We manage to get a part of Saturday off——"

"Call it next Saturday, then," said the man, heartily. "You live near Riverdale?"

Dan told him where. He likewise mentioned the fact that there was a crossroad from this highway near the Speedwell house, that led right down to the shore of Colasha River.

"And there is a wharf there belonging to John Bromley," added Dan.

"I know John," said the man, quickly. "I'll be there with the launch next Saturday. What time, boys?"

Dan and Billy figured that they would be free by one o'clock, and could get to the wharf in half an hour, easily.

"We'll run down on our motorcycles," said Billy.

"Motorcycles and a motor car, too, eh?" asked the launch owner. "You boys seem pretty well fixed for farmer's sons. Let's see! I believe your name must be Speedwell; isn't it?"

"Yes, sir," said Dan. "I am Dan and my brother is Billy."

"I've heard of you lads," said the launch owner. Then he added, as the boys went ashore: "I'll be waiting for you at John's. Don't fail me."

"No, sir. We'll surely come," cried Billy, who would not have missed the promised spin on the power launch for a great deal.

"What do you think of him?" Dan asked, when they were bowling along the shell road again, and their car was beginning to hum.

"He's got a fine boat. I wish we owned it!" said Billy, whose mind ran only on the beautiful *Red Arrow*.

"But how about that gloved hand? You see, he hid it all the time."

"Pshaw! He's too nice a man to be a criminal."

"I don't want to make trouble for anybody," said Dan. "But I'm going to find out somehow if number nine hundred and forty-seven is still in the Meadville Penitentiary!"

However, the Speedwells, as Dan had said, were much too busy, at work and at school, to have time through the week to run clear to Meadville to make the inquiry that Dan suggested. Besides, just now, Dan was deep in a problem that he had gone over in his mind for some time.

The Speedwells' two horses, Bob and Betty, were being worked pretty hard. There was the labor on the farm itself, and the two milk routes to travel each morning. The dairy business would not support another team, however, at present.

From the beginning, when Dan and Billy had bought their Breton-Melville car of Maxey Solomons, after that erratic youth had become discouraged over the machine, the older brother had believed in the feasibility of utilizing the motor car for something beside "joy riding."

With some help from Billy, and considerable aid from his father, who was a good mechanic, Dan had constructed a light but ingenious wagon body that could replace the tonneau of the motor car. This latter was arranged so that it could be released and swung off the trucks by the aid of a tackle and fall. Then the box body could be swung upon the trucks, and fastened in place. The racks and boxes which held the bottles in the two regular milk wagons the boys used, fitted into this body Dan had built. They built a wagon-cover of enamel cloth, and the wagon-body had

a drop-step behind so that one of the boys could work at that end, while the other drove the truck.

This scheme enabled the boys to combine both their routes and to work together. The shifting of the wagon-body for the tonneau of the car did not take an hour's time.

During this week, before their proposed trip on the *Red Arrow*, the Speedwells first put this new delivery car into use. Dan drove and Billy, hanging on behind, jumped off at each customer's door with the milk bottles, delivered them, and the car sped on. The new order of things worked well, and enabled Mr. Speedwell to use the horses on the farm.

During the week Dan had discovered some meager facts about the man who owned the *Red Arrow*. At least, he had learned all that anybody in Riverdale knew about him.

He called himself Asa Craig. When he bought anything in the village he bought for cash, and carried the goods himself to his launch. He never received any mail at the Riverdale postoffice. Nobody in the town had known him before Asa Craig appeared, with his *Red Arrow*, in the bay and river. Where he had come from, what his business was, or any other private particulars of the man himself, and his quiet existence, were matters of suspicion and gossip only.

The Speedwells told nobody of their acquaint-

## 26 SPEEDWELLS' POWER LAUNCH

ance with the mysterious Mr. Craig—least of all Biff Hardy. But both boys were curious, of course; and Billy was quite excited over the expected trip in the speedy launch.

They ran down to Bromley's wharf and fish-house and, before they reached the river shore, saw the launch lying off the end of the pier. They left their motorcycles in Bromley's care and hurried down to the water.

Asa Craig, the bewhiskered owner of the launch, stood at the rail, smiling, ready to welcome them aboard.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MAN IN THE STRIPED SUIT

AROUND the spiles and mooring stakes, in the quiet water, a skim of ice had formed in the night and still clung, sparkling in the sunlight. There was little wind, but the air was snapping.

"Good-day, boys," said the bearded man, offering each of the Speedwells his hand as they came over the rail. Both of his hands were gloved today, but perhaps that was because he had been working around his engine.

"We'll cast off at once. I've got plenty of gasoline this time," and he laughed.

"She's as easy to manage as a rowboat," declared the man, going forward to the little wheel. The launch was already putting her nose into the current. She shot out into the middle of the river and there Mr. Craig turned her bow directly up stream.

The launch owner soon learned that both Dan and Billy knew how to steer. The boys had been out in similar boats before; but never in a craft that was equal to the *Red Arrow*.

Soon Mr. Craig left Dan at the wheel and went back to his engine. He began to coax her along and to Billy, watching the water, it seemed as though the river was sucked by them as fast as a mill-race runs.

"It really needs two to properly manage the *Arrow*—if one wants to get speed out of her," said Mr. Craig.

"And she's going some now; isn't she?" cried Billy.

"Not above fourteen knots."

"My goodness! it seems as though she was traveling faster than our auto can run."

"That is because the current is so swift. But now, if you want to really see her go——"

He manipulated a lever or two. The launch fairly seemed to leap ahead. He ran to the wheel and relieved Dan. The *Red Arrow* was then fulfilling her name. She was traveling as though shot from a huge bow!

There were other craft out on the river this pleasant afternoon. The *Red Arrow* passed those going up stream like an express train going by a freight.

Soon, however, they had left all the local boats behind. The launch entered that stretch of straight, still water, ten miles in length, which terminated at the Meadville Mills.

Ere this, Mr. Craig had given both Dan and

Billy a lesson in steering this particular boat. The boys took to such instruction handily; they found it no trick at all to hold the speedy launch upon her course.

Before they reached Meadville proper the granite battlements of the prison came into view. Neither Dan nor Billy had thought of Biff Hardy's story of number nine hundred and forty-seven and the horseshoe scar, since embarking on the launch. But now Mr. Craig reduced speed, took the wheel himself, and ran in toward the wall that was built between the prison yards and the river.

Dan and Billy glanced covertly at each other. Their minds were on the same thought. They remained in the rear of the launch and although they did not speak at all, they watched the manœuvres of their host sharply.

There were two guards pacing the completed wall next the river. Beyond, a gang of laborers were working on an extension of the masonry.

When the *Red Arrow* was within a short rifle shot of the shore the nearest guard stopped in his walk and "grounded" his gun. Then he motioned to the man at the wheel of the launch to sheer off.

The latter seemed not to notice at first. The guard's gestures became more emphatic. No craft was allowed to run close to the prison wall.

The man's mate wheeled, and brought his gun to his shoulder.

"Hey, Mr. Craig!" cried Dan. "Look out where you're running to! We're not allowed in here."

"I see!" exclaimed the man at the wheel, sheering off. "I—I didn't notice."

But the approach of the launch had been noted by more than the guards. The boys saw that some of the prisoners had stopped work to watch the manœuvres of the *Red Arrow*.

One man in particular—a tall fellow in a suit, the gray stripes of which showed vividly against the yellow background—stood on the wall and stared directly at the launch.

As Mr. Craig turned the bow of the boat away from the wall he allowed his white handkerchief to slip from about his neck and drop overboard. It was a large handkerchief, and as the breeze seized and bore it away, it was plainly visible to all of the men along the wall.

The tall convict suddenly dropped the bar he had been using and stretched his arms above his head—once, twice, three times—just as though he were exercising with dumb-bells. A guard seemed to order him down, and he turned slowly to descend. Asa Craig removed his cap for an instant, and the launch swept on past the end of the wall.

Dan and Billy both had observed these things. Were they signals—signals exchanged by the man in the launch and the prisoner on the wall?

This was no time to discuss the point, however. Dan and Billy held the same suspicions, but they could not compare notes.

Mr. Craig seemed distraught and thoughtful after they passed the prison. He scarcely spoke to the boys until they were a long way beyond Meadville. Then he stopped the launch, running to a wharf where they could tie up, and prepared a little supper to which he invited the Speedwells to do justice—which they did, you may be sure, for the keen air had given them both wonderful appetites.

While they were eating Mr. Craig suddenly said:

“Boys, I have to go away and leave my launch in three days, and I am sorry for it.”

“Going to leave it?” exclaimed Dan and Billy together.

“Yes. I don’t want to put it up for the winter—I—might come back suddenly, and want to use it. I believe I’ll leave it down to John Bromley’s dock.”

“You will come back sometime, then, Mr. Craig?” asked Dan.

“Yes. I did not know that I should have to go away so soon. That is, I did not know it when

I invited you boys to take this little spin with me," Mr. Craig hastened to say.

He spoke disjointedly, as though he was thinking of something in secret while he talked to the boys.

"I tell you," he began again. "I want to give you boys several fine trips. Why, we could run clear outside the breakwater in the *Arrow*. I brought her down from New York myself, with one man, and by the outside passage."

"Thank you, Mr. Craig," said Dan, quietly. "We'll have to take the will for the deed, if you are going away."

"No, I declare you sha'n't miss the fun of it!" exclaimed the man, suddenly. "You know I've made inquiries about you boys," he added, frankly. "I know you are to be trusted. I'll leave my *Red Arrow* nominally in John Bromley's care, but you may use her when you like, providing you just pay for her up-keep—gasoline, lubricating oil, and so forth."

"Oh, jolly!" ejaculated Billy, before his brother could speak. "You don't mean that, Mr. Craig?"

"Yes, I do. If you would like to use the launch."

"Would we like to use it!" cried Billy.

The more cautious Dan had to agree. He did not know what else to do. There was something

wrong with Mr. Craig, he was sure; but what it was he did not know.

But when the *Red Arrow* had brought them safely to John Bromley's wharf, and they had bidden Mr. Craig good-bye, and had climbed on their motorcycles and saw their entertainer waving his gloved hand at them from the deck of the launch, Dan said something to Billy that brought him up short and made him think of something beside the glorious fun he hoped was in store for them.

"Look here, Billy!" exclaimed the older brother. "Why do you suppose Mr. Craig never said a word about going away in three days' time, before we reached the Meadville prison?"

"Huh?" grunted Billy, opening his eyes.

"And don't you think that the prisoner stretching his arms above his head three times had something to do with the limit Mr. Craig had given himself for remaining with the launch?"

"Why—what——"

"Well, what do you think?" demanded Dan, sharply.

"I—I don't know," mumbled Billy.

"Well there's one thing I'm going to know!" declared Dan, with emphasis.

"What's that?"

"I'm going to find out something about number nine hundred and forty-seven. We should have

done it before. There's something fishy about Mr. Craig."

"Oh, crickey, Dan!" cried his brother, "you won't refuse to make use of that launch,"

"Do we want to get mixed up with any trouble?" cried Dan.

"Well—no! But think of the fun——"

Billy couldn't get over that. He was very anxious to get out in that power launch and run her himself.

"Wait till Monday. We'll squeeze in time after school to run out to Meadville and make inquiries," said Dan, finally.

## CHAPTER V

### DEEP IN TROUBLE

IT began to snow on Sunday night and the Speedwell boys had all they could do Monday morning to get around with the milk, for the storm continued. No thought had they for any run to the Meadville prison that day.

So much snow fell, too, that Tuesday was no day for a spin into the country. The roads were full of drifts and had to be ploughed and packed down by traffic. There was a freeze Tuesday night, however, and the highway was hard and firm the next morning.

When Dan and Billy went to town with the milk they learned that there had been an accident to the boiler at the academy and there were to be no classes that day. The heating apparatus would first have to be repaired.

"We'll hustle home," said Dan, "lift off this body, and run out to Meadville without bothering to put on the tonneau."

"You're still determined to look up Mr. Craig's record?" grumbled Billy.

"No, number nine hundred and forty-seven's.

I don't know whether he has anything to do with Asa Craig, or not. But I am puzzled—and I hate to give up anything that puzzles me so!”

Buckwheats and syrup having been disposed of, the boys lifted off the milk-wagon body from the trucks. The tonneau and this body of Dan's invention were interchangeable. The driver's seat was wide enough for three people with a little crowding. Dan and Billy ran the auto out upon the well-beaten road and started for Meadville.

There had been plenty of sleighs out, as well as automobiles. Mr. Raleigh Briggs, who was a wealthy autoist and was the heaviest stock holder in the Compton Motordrome, owned a motor sleigh, and the Speedwells passed it not far up the county road.

Mr. Briggs waved his hand to them as his French mechanic, Henri, flashed the new machine past the boys. A little later he turned and came back again. Billy was at the wheel of the drab car and he put on all the speed he dared on such a slippery track. The motor sledge went by them like a streak of light!

“That's going some!” cried Billy, with an envious sigh. “It must be great to own one of those things, Dannie.”

“And you'd like to have one as well as a launch?” chuckled Dan. “Billy-boy! I believe your bump of acquisitiveness is being rapidly de-

veloped. You won't be satisfied until you become another Midas."

"Huh! I reckon my ears aren't growing any longer than yours," responded his brother, quickly. "There! that's the main tower of the prison ahead."

The Breton-Melville car, on its arrival at the town, was turned out into the deeper snow and stopped before a narrow, but massive door set in the granite wall of the tower. It was not the main door to the prison, but there was a grating in it, and the boys could see an officer pacing the stone-floored corridor inside.

He came to the door at once when Dan and Billy reached it.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"We'd like to make an inquiry about a prisoner," said Dan, at once.

"This isn't visitors' day. I can't allow you in here," said the man.

"But we don't wish to see the prisoner in question. We only want to ask about him."

"Go to the office and see the warden."

"Say!" broke in Billy, who believed in getting at a thing in the shortest time possible. "You can tell us all we want to know."

"I don't know whether I can——"

"There's a man here numbered nine-forty-seven, eh?"

"Nine-forty-seven?" repeated the officer, slowly. "Why—yes! I can tell you that."

"Sure he's here?"

"Certainly!" Then the man laughed shortly. "I reckon the warden wouldn't care to lose one of his most important boarders."

"He's of some importance, is he?" interposed Dan.

"He's a long term man—twenty years."

"What for?"

"Arson. If you don't know Fred Gedney, why do you ask about him?"

"Just curious, that's all," said Billy, grinning; but his brother added:

"We're much obliged to you, sir. You might tell us one thing more, and that is if he has a scar on his left hand?"

"I should say he had! Got burned with a horseshoe. He's marked, all right. If he should escape, that brand would bring him back if nothing else did."

"We have heard of the mark," said Dan, slowly. "It was made since he became a prisoner?"

"Yes. It was an accident."

"So we heard."

"You seem to have a good deal of interest in the man, considering you didn't know him before he came here," said the officer, curiously.

"Yes. We heard something about him. He's been here how long?"

"Going on three years."

"Much obliged to you," said Dan, turning away, accompanied by Billy.

"Hope you're satisfied," grunted Billy to his brother. "You see that Mr. Craig is an entirely different man."

"But the horseshoe scar?" murmured Dan.

"You never saw it!"

"But you say you did?"

"I saw a hand with that kind of a mark on it, but how do I know it was Mr. Craig's hand?" demanded Billy, sharply.

"Well!"

"Neither Biff nor I saw his face. It might have been his hand, or it might not——"

"He keeps his left hand gloved, remember that," said Dan.

"We never happened to see him when he didn't wear gloves, that's all," said Billy. "That isn't so strange this time of year."

"There's a big car coming behind us," said Billy, looking back a few minutes later.

"Whose is it?"

"New to me. Say! let me drive; will you, Dan?"

His brother slipped from the steering wheel and Billy took his place. The younger Speedwell

was always ready for a race. He started up the Breton-Melville full speed at once.

Dan glanced back after a moment. He saw a man standing in the following car, who seemed to be shouting something at them.

"Hold up! I believe those folks want to speak to us," he said to Billy.

"Let 'em catch us!" returned his brother, with a grin.

And then Dan uttered a cry of surprise. "Stop, Billy!" he commanded. "There are four men in the car. They've got guns. One of them will plug our tires in a moment if we don't stop!"

It was true. The man standing in the pursuing car was sighting along the barrel of a rifle he held and was, without doubt, aiming at the left rear tire of the Breton-Melville car!

"Gee!" groaned Billy, giving likewise a swift glance behind them. "Blue suits! Prison guards! I told you, Dan Speedwell, we'd get neck deep into trouble if we went there making foolish inquiries."

## CHAPTER VI

### TWO MEN MISSING

BILLY stopped. The heavy touring car rumbled alongside and the man who had threatened them with the rifle stepped out into the snow and came directly to the smaller car. He was a man with a bristling white mustache and goatee, and he scowled at the Speedwell brothers as he looked them over.

"Are these the two chaps, Horace?" he demanded of one of the other men, and the boys noted then the presence of the officer they had talked with at the prison gate.

"Them's the lads," said the prison officer, laconically.

"I'm McDow, warden of the Meadville prison," said the white-mustached man. "I want to know why you boys are so much interested in a convict with the mark of a horseshoe burned on the back of his hand?"

Dan glanced swiftly at Billy and the younger boy left it to his older brother to do the talking.

"Because we heard about the man, and how he was burned," said Dan, promptly.

"Where do you boys live?"

Dan told him, and the warden's scowl did not clear as he asked instantly:

"And you expect me to believe that you two rode clear over from Riverdale just to ask if such a man was in prison?"

"I guess we can't make you believe anything we say," replied Dan, with some indignation. "Another thing, I do not believe you have any right to point a gun at us on the public road."

"I am an officer of the law, young man," said the warden, tartly; "and you'll find that tampering with escaped convicts isn't a safe business."

"Escaped convicts!" repeated Billy.

"And how did you know number nine hundred and forty-seven had got away? This very morning, too!" exclaimed the warden, looking from one to the other of the Speedwells.

"We knew nothing about it, I assure you!" said Dan, gravely. "We merely made our inquiries to satisfy a private curiosity. Another boy, whose father worked in the blacksmith shop where this convict was burned on the hand, told us about him. We—we were curious to know if it was so——"

"And you happened to come to the penitentiary on the very morning Gedney escaped?" demanded the man, scornfully. "That's a likely story!"

"I tell you that you will not believe anything

that we say. So what is the use of my replying to your questions at all?" cried Dan, hotly.

Just here one of the other men in the touring car spoke to Mr. McDow.

"I know who those boys are, warden," this man said. "They bear a good reputation. Their name is Speedwell, and their father owns a little place just this side of Riverdale. They're the boys who won the thousand mile endurance race last Fall. You remember them?"

"They may be all right," grunted McDow, but in a tone that showed he did not believe it.

Dan had thought the situation over with his usual caution. He determined to say nothing regarding Asa Craig. In the first place, Mr. Craig could not possibly be the prisoner with the scarred hand, if the latter had escaped only that morning.

"Well, we'd better get along," said the warden, slowly stepping back from the Breton-Melville car. "That fellow got away slick, that's sure. And he didn't escape by water. I'll get him again if it takes me six months to do it!"

"Now what do you think of that?" cried Billy, the instant the prison officers were out of earshot.

"I think it's about as queer a thing as ever happened to us," admitted Dan, slowly.

"And number nine hundred and forty-seven!"

"Say! It's just three days since we ran up the river with the *Red Arrow* and Mr. Craig signalled to that fellow on the river wall."

"Did he signal him?" demanded Billy.

"Well! it looked like it to me," said Dan.

"But you don't claim, of course, that Mr. Craig is the escaped prisoner?" chuckled Billy.

"Well, I'd feel a whole lot better satisfied if we'd ever been able to see the back of Mr. Craig's left hand," grumbled Dan. "And I'm going down there to the wharf now and see if we can catch him."

"Go ahead!" said Billy. "I don't mind."

But when they reached John Bromley's wharf, the *Red Arrow* lay moored beside the fish-house, and it was evident that she was deserted.

"Yes," Bromley told them, "Mr. Craig's gone. Here's a letter he left for you. He told me you boys were to use the launch at any time—I'm only responsible for it when it's tied up here. I guess you Speedwells will take good care of the boat."

"Sure we will, John!" cried Billy, with satisfaction.

He wanted to get right aboard of the launch, and take a trip in her; but Dan would not agree.

"You know, we've got to ask father and mother about it first," said the older boy. "It's strange that he should have given us permission to make use of the *Red Arrow*, when we have known him so short a time. There's something funny about it, I tell you."

"And I tell *you*," cried Billy, in deep disgust, "that you're looking a gift horse in the mouth! You're not grateful at all for Mr. Craig's kindness. Come on! Let's see what he says in his letter."

They were in the car then, and running easily toward home. Dan let his brother handle the wheel while he broke the seal of the launch owner's epistle. Mr. Craig's letter was brief, but to the point, and as follows:

"My Dear Speedwell Boys:—

"I am leaving my launch, the *Red Arrow*, jointly in the care of John Bromley and yourselves. John will take care of it at the wharf, but you are to have the sole right to use the launch until my return. I enclose the bill of sale and receipt for the money paid to the manufacturers of the boat, so that your right, or my ownership in the same, cannot be questioned. You will not give up the launch to anybody unless such claimant can show a written order from me for the delivery of the *Red Arrow*. She is yours to use until I return, or send such written order.

"Your friend

"A. CRAIG."

The papers mentioned were in a separate envelope. Mr. Craig certainly had made everything

right for them if they wished to use the power launch. Billy was delighted. Dan, still puzzled, determined to put the matter before his father as soon as they got home.

This the Speedwell boys did, and in family conclave the matter of the mysterious Mr. Craig, the escaped prisoner, and the power launch, was thoroughly thrashed out that very night.

Mrs. Speedwell's sole objection to the boys using the launch seemed to be on the ground that they might get drowned! But she knew that Dan was careful, and that Billy was easily influenced by his more cautious brother. So, her objection was but mildly stated.

"Daniel is very conscientious—you know that, Stephen," she said. "I wish that this Mr. Craig had come here and seen us."

"But he seems to be missing—like number nine hundred and forty-seven," said her husband with a smile. "There are two missing men, but I really don't see that we should worry ourselves about either of them. And while the weather is good, and you wish to do so, I see no reason why you boys should not make use of the *Red Arrow*."

So it was settled. Even Dan could not have imagined the incidents that would arise from their use of the power launch; and, to tell the truth, he was almost as eager to sail the *Red Arrow* as Billy was himself.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

IT was the holiday time, and for a few days Dan and Billy had no attention to give to Mr. Craig's *Red Arrow*, the power launch that had been left in their care. But a warm spell of weather had removed all trace of the snow and—if not balmy—the last days of the old year were mild and sunshiny.

The Speedwells were out in the *Red Arrow* on the first afternoon that was really pleasant, and on the trip up the river with Mr. Craig the Saturday before, he had so carefully instructed Dan and Billy in the working of the craft, that they had no trouble at all with her.

"My goodness, Dannie!" cried the younger boy. "She's a thing of life! She answers her helm as a horse does the rein. And as for the engine—well!" finished Billy, with a sigh of delight, "it's a dream!"

They ran past the Meadville prison, and saw

the men working on the wall; but no one in a striped suit signalled to them, and the Speedwells kept well away from the vicinity of the penitentiary.

They ran the *Red Arrow* up as far as Karnac Lake—into the lake, in fact. There was a thin border of ice around the islands that dotted the surface of the great, smooth body of water; but a landing could have been made anywhere.

As the handsome launch swept up the lake, the white wave fanning out upon either bow, Billy, who was at the wheel, shouted to his brother:

"Look, Dannie! Cast your eye to 'loo'ard,' as old John says. What launch is that lying off the Stetson cottage?"

"That's the *Crow Flight*; belongs to Jim Stetson's uncle. He brought her down from New York only last week. Didn't you hear about it?"

"That got by me," admitted Billy. "Say! she's a spick and span craft, all right, isn't she?"

"Pretty neat," admitted Dan. "And Jim says she's the speediest thing in Boat Club cove."

"I'm glad he puts that limit on her," grunted Billy.

"Why so?"

"He doesn't include the *Red Arrow*, then, in the 'also rans.' I bet we could beat that *Crow Flight*, Dannie."

"I don't know about that. She is bigger and carries a more powerful engine."

"And the *Red Arrow's* lighter and therefore doesn't need so heavy an engine to reach the same speed," retorted Billy.

Dan did not reply for a moment, and his brother turned to see what he was about. He saw Dan staring at the *Crow Flight*, as they swept past, very earnestly indeed.

"What do you see, old man?" asked Billy.

"Chance Avery! Yes, sir! he's aboard there and he's helping get her under way. I reckon what Jim said has happened."

"What is Chance Avery doing aboard the Stetson boat?" demanded Billy.

"Jim, or Ruth, haven't anything to do with their uncle's launch," explained Dan. "And Jim told me yesterday at school that he believed Chance was pulling wires to get taken aboard the *Crow Flight* as a member of the craft's regular crew."

"Isn't that fellow the limit!" exclaimed Billy.

"He's a regular toady, isn't he?"

"Jim's sore," laughed Dan, good naturedly. "Says he won't step aboard the launch if Chance is going on her. There's going to be a big time New Year's Eve at the boat club, and, if it is a mild night, there'll be a parade of the boats up and down the river, all illuminated."

"I know about that," said Billy, shortly. "But what does Mr. Stetson want of Avery aboard his launch?"

"Now, you know, Billy," said his brother, calmly, "that Jim's uncle only buys launches, and autos, and his cottage up here on the lake, and a hunting camp in the woods, and all such luxuries, for just one person."

"Jim's cousin, Lawrence," admitted Billy, gravely.

"That's it. Lawrence has to go on crutches, and will have to go on 'em as long as he lives, it's likely. And they don't know how long that may be. So if Larry expresses any wish at all, it's fulfilled instantly.

"Larry likes Chance Avery. They are about of an age, you know. And—as you say—I expect Chance toadies to Larry. He's been babied and spoiled; but he's a cripple. Now, you see, that's how Chance has got into Mr. Stetson's good graces. Mr. Stetson's tried to get the fastest boat he could find, and if there are races on New Year's Day, as the Colasha Club has planned, Chance Avery will have a good deal to do with the sailing of this *Crow Flight*."

"Well," grumbled Billy, "I guess this little old *Red Arrow* could wipe up the river with her!"

Dan laughed loudly at this. "Don't you mean

'mop up the river,' Billy-boy?" he cried. "The river's pretty wet, you know."

"Well, this launch can beat that *Crow Flight*, I'm sure!"

"Maybe, Billy," admitted Dan, quietly.

"Say! she's getting under way, as you said, Dan," exclaimed Billy, eagerly. "Let's give her a brush."

"But it's time we ran back, Billy," objected Dan.

"She's turning to go down the river herself!" cried his brother, and immediately he began to bring the *Red Arrow* about.

Dan sprang to reduce speed, for taking so short a curve, the launch was bound to ship some water.

"Now, now!" he cried, "don't be too brash, Billy."

"I know we can catch that *Crow Flight*," returned his brother.

"All right. Go to it, boy! She seems to be running free and easy."

This statement referred to their own engine. The exhaust, muffled and mellow, was as regular as the tick of a clock. Once with her nose pointed down the lake the *Red Arrow* cut the water like a shark.

There were a dozen folk aboard the *Crow Flight* and the Speedwell boys had not been fol-

lowing the larger launch for long ere the *Red Arrow* was noticed by some of the party on the Stetson craft. Dan and Billy saw these people pointing toward the pursuing launch, and then the *Crow Flight* began to leave a broader wake and one streaked with foam.

"They are putting on speed, Dan," cried Billy. "Whip her up, will you?"

His brother increased their own pace a little. The patent log showed their speed to be seventeen knots an hour. The gale that blew so cuttingly past the Speedwell brothers and their launch, was a gale of their own making. The *Red Arrow* was beginning to show her paces.

She crept up, slowly but steadily, on the trail of the forward launch. The latter's passengers continued to be much interested in the race, and Dan and Billy suddenly observed Chance Avery, their old-time enemy and rival on both the motorcycle and auto, come to the stern and shade his eyes with his hand to look at the *Red Arrow* and the boys who handled her.

"I reckon he'll recognize us, Dan," chuckled Billy, from the wheel.

"He is going to show us what he can do with the *Crow Flight*," returned Dan.

It was true that the moment Chance disappeared from the stern the bigger craft began to pick up her heels. She had reached the river

now and, in the narrower water-way, the two launches kept in mid-stream and one directly behind the other.

Masset's Landing was not far ahead and there was "white water" there, as the boatman called the shallow, rocky bottom which roughened the surface of the otherwise deep and calm Colasha River.

The *Crow Flight* ran down to this rough water at a pace that put the Speedwells to it to hold their own. But when the bigger craft began to toss and jerk in the rapids it was evident that the lady members of the party aboard the Stetson launch objected to the pace. They were frightened, although there really was no danger.

However, the *Crow Flight* reduced speed and the *Red Arrow* overtook her in splendid style. The brothers passed the larger craft within a few yards only, a white wave, divided by the *Red Arrow's* bow, fanned out on either hand in sparkling, iridescent spray.

The owner of the rival craft was aboard, and Dan and Billy saw, likewise the crippled young man, Lawrence Stetson, wrapped in a steamer rug and reclining in a deck chair. Mr. Stetson, whom the boys knew very well, having visited Stetson Lodge twice with their school chum, Jim Stetson, beckoned them to stop, and Dan instantly reduced speed.

"Oh, pshaw!" growled Billy, "they're afraid to race us."

"We'll race the *Crow Flight* all right when the proper time comes," admonished his brother. "Starboard, Billy, Mr. Stetson wants to speak to us."

"Hi, Dan Speedwell!" shouted Mr. Stetson, who was a portly, good natured man. "Is that the launch you and Billy are to have the use of?"

"Yes, sir," replied the older Speedwell.

"My nephew, James, was telling us about it. And I have noticed the *Red Arrow*. She's a likely craft."

"Mr. Craig thinks so," replied Dan. "And we are mighty glad to get the use of her."

"You boys should join the Boat Club and bring the launch down to the cove."

"Mr. Craig prefers to have her taken care of privately," Dan said.

"Well, you know we are going to have a celebration New Year's Eve, and on New Year's Day, too. That is, weather permitting!" said Mr. Stetson. "You must bring the *Red Arrow* down at night and join the parade. We're going to illuminate the river. And on New Year's there will be races. Won't you enter the *Red Arrow*?"

"Tell him 'Yes!,' tell him 'Yes,' " urged Billy, under his breath.

"We'll be glad to come down," said Dan. "We didn't know that outsiders would be welcome."

"You'll be welcomed all right," declared Mr. Stetson. "In the illuminated parade, for sure. And I'll see the committee about your entering in the races. But we want all the power boats on the river to take part in New Year's Eve celebration. Now, boys, we shall look for you."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RACE

THE next morning Riverdale was rife with gossip about the proposed New Year's Eve celebration of the Colasha Boat Club. The club house itself was being festooned with strings of colored electric lights. The cove was an almost land-locked bay, and posts were set and lights affixed clear around the pool to the narrow inlet.

But Dan and Billy Speedwell were more deeply interested in the races that were to be held on New Year's Day. The short distance speed trials were to be run over the old rowing course, from the Long Bridge down to the mouth of the Colasha River. But there was a twenty-mile run from the cove to the Meadville Bridge and return that interested Dan and Billy.

As they were going over to Mr. Appleyard's store for their motorcycles, after school closed that afternoon, the Speedwell boys, with a party of their school fellows, both girls and boys, were enthusiastically discussing the coming fete. They all halted at Mildred Kent's gate, as they often

did, for the doctor's daughter was one of the most popular girls attending the Riverdale Academy.

"What I want to know," said the sprightly Lettie Parker, "is whether any girls are going to be invited as guests on the racing boats. I want to see a race from the deck of one of the competing launches."

"If the *Red Arrow* is allowed to enter for the twenty-mile event," said Billy Speedwell, "you shall go, Lettie. But wear your mackintosh, for she'll throw some spray, now, I tell you."

"You will be disappointed, I fear, if you wait for the Speedwells to take you to the race, Miss Lettie," said a new voice behind them, and the boys and girls turned to observe a touring car that had halted at the curb beside them.

Chance Avery sat in the tonneau beside the well wrapped-up figure of Mr. Evan Stetson's crippled son.

Some of the crowd hailed Larry cordially; but Lettie Parker and the Speedwells gave their attention to Avery. The latter's smile showed that he was very well satisfied with himself—indeed, that something must have recently occurred to please him very much.

"And you're not likely to be, I fancy," said Billy Speedwell. "But we can imagine that, as you speak so positively, you have been doing your

best to make it impossible for outsiders to race on New Year's."

"Really, how smart you are, Bill Speedwell!" returned the captain of the Riverdale Outing Club. "You evidently know just what I would do if I could. But I am not a member of the Executive Committee of the boat club."

"And you're not likely to be, I fancy," said Lettie, quite as sharply as her friend, Billy. The "bronze haired" young lady was ever ready to quarrel with Billy; but she would take up the cudgels in his defense quite as quickly too!

"Never mind," said Avery, sneeringly. "I can tell you something that has been decided against you, Speedwells."

"I did not know that the boat club took any interest at all in us, Chance," broke in Dan, who had heretofore been silent.

"No; but you are interested in what the committee has decided," snarled Avery.

"How so?" asked Dan, coolly.

"They have agreed that no launch can race on New Year's except one owned by a member of the club, or an invited guest of the club who sails his own craft, or appoints a representative particularly to sail it for him in these races. You're making use of that *Red Arrow* while the owner is away, and are not his particular representative for this race. I guess that lets you out, Speed-

well!" and Chance chuckled with enjoyment over the discomfiture that he knew the brothers would feel.

"It looks a whole lot to me," broke in Jim Stetson from his cousin's side, "as though you were afraid the *Crow Flight* you are going to help run, would be beaten by the *Red Arrow*."

"Nonsense!" muttered Avery.

"I guess if you boys wanted to try out your launches very badly you could race without waiting for the boat club's say-so," interrupted Lettie Parker. "It looks to me like one crowd being afraid, and the other dassent!" and she laughed, merrily.

Now that stung Billy Speedwell to the quick.

"We'll race the *Crow Flight* any day they say—and under any conditions!" he cried. "Won't we, Dan?"

"All we want is the chance," agreed his brother.

"Well, now!" cried Larry Stetson, "we'll give you a chance, won't we, Avery? Won't we give them a chance? Any day you want to race the *Red Arrow* with the *Crow Flight*, you just say so. How's that, Avery?"

He was easily excited, and despite the fact that he was older than the group of school-fellows from the Academy, he was more childish than any.

"We'll have to ask your father," said Chance Avery, hesitatingly.

"Aw, pshaw!" exclaimed Jim Stetson. "You know, Chance, that Uncle won't give a continental about it, if you all went out right now and raced the two boats."

"We can't do it this afternoon," objected Avery.

"We can to-morrow!" cried the cripple. "Say, now, are you Speedwell boys afraid to meet us on the river to-morrow?"

"Why, Larry, we're not afraid to meet you any time," said Dan Speedwell, laughing. "If you want to race, we'll race you. We'd rather do it in the regular regatta on New Year's Day; but if that is not to be, why, we'll try you any time."

"It's agreed, then!" cried the crippled young man, to Dan. "We'll try the launches out to-morrow?"

"If you say so, Larry," returned the older Speedwell brother.

But when Dan and Billy were speeding home on their motorcycles the first named said:

"It strikes me, Billy-boy, that Chance Avery isn't anxious to meet us on the river, in spite of his blowing about the good qualities of Mr. Stetson's launch."

"Did he ever want to meet us in a fair trial?" demanded Billy, sharply.

"I think," said Dan, quietly, "that we'd better warn Old John to keep a sharp eye on the *Red Arrow*. I wouldn't want Mr. Craig's launch to be damaged while he is away."

The Speedwells arranged their work on the following day (which was clear and warm) so that they could have the extra hours of the afternoon. As soon as the Academy let out they leaped upon their Flying Feather motorcycles, and raced to John Bromley's wharf. They had already notified the boat-keeper of their intention, and he had removed the canvas covering from the launch and the *Red Arrow* was in trim for a trip.

Billy saw to the filling of the gasoline tank while Dan oiled up, and in ten minutes, the staccato popping of the engine announced the departure of the *Red Arrow* from the old wharf.

When Dan and Billy headed down stream with the *Red Arrow* on this pleasant afternoon they saw that the river road was dotted with automobiles and that on the verge of the still green embankment, many groups of spectators were gathered. It was plain that not only their school fellows, both boys and girls, but many of the townspeople had heard of the race and were on hand to see it.

Dan and Billy Speedwell were popular, not only among their school fellows, but in the town.

Chance Avery, however, had plenty of friends among the young men who attended the Business College; so there was a goodly portion of the spectators who were cheering for the *Crow Flight*.

And as she swept out of the cove into the river, she certainly was a pretty sight. Beside Larry Stetson, there were four aboard to handle her, chief among whom was Chance Avery.

Monroe Stevens, whose father owned a launch, was at the wheel of the *Crow Flight*. He handled the beautiful boat with skill. As she swept out into the river on a long curve, and Monroe turned her prow up stream, Larry, in his comfortable steamer chair, uttered a feeble cheer.

"Here comes that red-striped launch!" he cried. "Chance, are you sure we'll beat her?"

"We'll either beat her or run her under," muttered Avery.

"Oh, we want to win fairly," said Stetson. "Don't we, Monroe?"

"We won't run the *Red Arrow* under as long as I'm at the wheel, whether we win or lose," said Monroe, significantly.

The Speedwells were running down the river at a moderate pace. The tide was coming in and that balanced the natural force of the river current. The *Red Arrow* kept away from the *Crow*

*Flight*, as though she intended to make a long curve in turning.

Aboard the smaller launch Dan was saying to Billy:

"You can see what Chance is doing—he's already got her speed up. She's just tearing up stream toward us. As we turn she'll shoot by and we'll have a handicap of several lengths right at the start. And I bet the people ashore will hardly notice the trick."

"Of course, confound him!" grunted Billy. "He'll take every advantage he can—honest, or otherwise."

"We'll see if we can't fool him," returned his brother, who held the wheel. "Open her up a little, Billy; but stand ready to get wet, for we're bound to ship some of this river water when I turn."

No sooner said than done. The *Red Arrow* had not quite reached the *Crow Flight* when Dan shouted, and sent her wheel over. The launch spun about as though on a pivot!

Chance Avery had not been expecting such a quick manœuver on the part of the *Speedwells*. He had hoped to obtain a clear advantage over his antagonist at the start. But, despite the water the *Red Arrow* shipped, she dashed alongside the *Crow Flight* and the two boats were bow and bow in half a minute.

A roar of sound went up from the crowd along shore. The two boats were right together—it was the start!

“Away!” shouted Larry Stetson, excitedly.

Dan waved his hand in friendly response and immediately the two launches leaped ahead like two horses under the spur. The race was on!

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SINKING BOAT

THERE was a breath of keen, wintry air blowing down the stream, and to Dan and Billy it seemed as though the *Red Arrow* was shooting right into this gale. The sting of it cut their faces; and the spindrift whipped from the wave which parted ahead of the launch stung them, too.

"Crickey!" shouted the younger lad; "this is going some, Dan! Shall I let her out another notch?"

"Wait!" commanded the older Speedwell.

"But the *Crow Flight* is drawing ahead."

"She may be a little; but we'll wait a while. We must have some reserve speed, and the race is young yet."

But the *Crow Flight* was steadily forging ahead of her competitor. Billy grew nervous and pushed the throttle of the *Red Arrow* over another notch. Like a streak of light the launch shot past the Stetson boat and they came to the lower end of the island.

"Oh, it's a walk-over!" yelled Billy, delighted at the speed the *Red Arrow* displayed, and fairly dancing up and down in her cockpit. From the Riverdale shore came a faint sound of cheering. "Hear 'em, Dan?"

"I hear them," returned his brother.

"We've got Chance and his old tub beat!"

"I tell you we've nothing of the kind," objected Dan. "What does she register?"

Billy carefully studied out the record of the log.

"Near as I can make out," he said, with glee, "she's making her nineteen knots an hour right now!"

"And Mr. Craig only promised us twenty knots as her top-notch speed. We have practically no reserve for a sprint. Before we know it the *Crow Flight* will walk away with us."

Dan jerked these sentences out as he watched his course and held the wheel with care. The launch throbbed from stem to stern. The wave her bow cut seemed rounded up, higher than the launch's rail, and ready to pour inboard!

"I don't believe it!" shouted Billy.

"Wait! We're not half way to the end of the course."

The long "hog-back" of Island Number One began to shut off their view of the farther shore of the river. From up stream a black launch—

a craft much larger than either the *Crow Flight* or the *Red Arrow*—was coming down upon the contestants. Suddenly, out from the shelter of Island Number One shot a yawl pulled by a single oarsman. He was making for the farther shore of the river.

"He'll about get in our way when we've rounded the island," shouted Billy, calling his brother's attention to this man in the rowboat.

"Well, we know he's there," returned Dan, in the same loud tone. They had to shout to each other to be heard.

The *Crow Flight* was creeping up upon the launch with the red stripe around her hull; the big black craft was coming down the course and had almost reached the upper end of the island.

"Shall I pull in toward the island, Billy?" Dan asked. "That black boat is going to cut us off from making a short turn, otherwise."

"Why not hug the island?" returned his brother.

"There's shoal water here. You know that," said Dan.

Both the Speedwells were familiar with the river—were good pilots on all the neighboring waters, in fact. There was a spit—a continuation of the island itself—that stretched up stream, just under water, for some yards.

It was unsafe to round the island too soon.

Dan and Billy knew that well. But this spit—like Island Number One, itself—was narrow.

Dan kept the nose of the *Red Arrow* pointed directly up stream, while the black launch sheered off to give the competitors room. The rowboat was now, of course, out of the Speedwells' sight.

Behind the *Red Arrow* came the chug, chug, chug, of the *Crow Flight*. The Stetson craft was almost upon them. Indeed, it looked as though Chance was trying to run them down!

But when Dan and Billy glanced back they saw that Monroe Stevens was still at the wheel. They knew that Monroe would stand for no trickery—nor did they believe that the crippled youth, Larry Stetson, wished to win the race in any but a fair manner. If Chance Avery wanted to be mean he would have hard work getting his desire under the present circumstances!

In a moment the Speedwells saw why the *Crow Flight* was so closely following them. Monroe, less familiar with the river than themselves, suddenly threw his wheel over and brought the bow of the launch he steered around with a rush. She darted directly over the sand-spit!

And on the instant she stopped short, while a wave of water boiled over her rail!

"They're aground!" yelled Billy, and it must be confessed that his tone displayed no sorrow.

The engine of the *Crow Flight* was a powerful

one, however, and Chance instantly reversed. While the *Red Arrow* was steaming ahead, and finally turned the island in safety, the larger launch pulled free. Her keel had been buried in nothing but sand, and she was not materially injured. But the Speedwells had the best chance to win that race!

Already the *Red Arrow* was around the island and was headed down stream.

"There's that rowboat, Dan!" yelled Billy.

The yawl they had noticed before was being pulled directly across their path. The boys noticed, as the launch darted on, that the oarsman stopped rowing and began to bail out his boat. And he bailed fast and furiously. She seemed to have shipped quite a lot of water.

On and on rushed the *Red Arrow*, while the pursuing launch struggled at top speed to overtake her. Billy's grin was wide. He saw victory ahead of them as plainly as he saw the flagpole on the peak of the Colasha Boat Club tower!

But suddenly Dan uttered a startled shout and the *Red Arrow* swerved to port. Billy left the engine to see what was the matter. The launch was darting off at a tangent—was leaving the course.

"What's the matter with you, Dan?" yelled the excited Billy. "You don't want to fool this way. We can't afford it!"

Dan turned his face toward him for an instant and the expression the younger boy saw on it did not suggest that Dan was in a fooling mood. The older brother pointed and Billy's gaze followed the direction indicated. He was just in time to see the small yawl sink beneath the surface, leaving its occupant struggling in the river!

"Goodness gracious!" yelled Billy. "Couldn't he have selected any other time to drown than just *now*?"

The *Red Arrow* shot across to the man in the water, and Billy reversed. The man was a long swim from the island, and more than a mile from the shore of the river, toward which he had started to row. His accident had certainly happened at a very unfortunate time for the Speedwells, for while they went to his rescue the *Crow Flight* swept by, rushing down the river at even greater speed than before, and the brothers heard the tantalizing voice of Chance Avery chaffing them.

Even Billy, however, soon forgot the race. The man in the water was in great peril. Both the Speedwells saw that he had already sunk twice and that now his struggles above the surface were feeble indeed.

He had been well off the course of the racing launches, but Dan feared that the wash of the *Red Arrow*, if not that of the passing *Crow*

*Flight*, would bear the drowning man down again. It was evident that he was no swimmer.

"Stand ready to grab him, Billy!" cried Dan, and brought the launch about with skill. She still had plenty of momentum, although Billy had shut off the power.

The younger lad seized a boathook and stood at the rail with it poised. The man was going down again. He threw up his left arm as he went under and Billy Speedwell saw the back of his hairy hand.

*There was the vivid red scar of the horseshoe upon it!*

The younger Speedwell was so surprised by this that he almost dropped the boathook and allowed the man to sink! But then he recovered some measure of his self-control and began to spear for the drowning man, a good deal as though he was an eel!

"Careful, Billy!" yelled Dan from the wheel.

But the desperate Billy caught the hook in the man's coat sleeve. The stuff of which the garment was made was tough and strong. Billy drew the drowning man to the surface again, and alongside the launch.

Dan ran down from the wheel and together the boys seized upon the fellow in the river. He had not entirely lost consciousness. His big left palm seized upon the rail of the *Red Arrow*.

Dan, as well as his brother, beheld the scar on his hand.

"Great Scott!" muttered Dan, casting a sharp glance at his brother.

He saw that Billy recognized the scar as well as he did himself. They both looked quickly to see what manner of countenance the man possessed.

But it was not the bewhiskered face of Mr. Craig which they beheld. It was a smoothly shaven, gaunt countenance; and to Dan, at least, it seemed a wicked-looking face.

"Get me aboard!" commanded the man, hoarsely.

The boys dragged him over the rail. He sprawled, panting and gasping like a freshly caught fish, but in a moment he raised himself on hands and knees and flashed a suspicious glance all about him.

"You boys alone on this boat?" he croaked.

Dan said "Yes." Billy said nothing, but stared at the man with ever-increasing wonder.

"Turn her for the other shore," commanded the fellow, waving his hand toward that bank of the river to which he had evidently started to row in his leaking yawl.

Dan did not give him his full attention. He had suddenly been attracted by something down the river. The big black launch that they had

before noticed had turned, and was coming up stream on this side of the island—and coming “with a bone in her teeth.”

“Hurry up!” repeated the man.

But Dan said to Billy: “See that launch? They want to speak to us. We’d better wait, I believe.”

The man from the river heard him, and instantly staggered to his feet. He gazed for a few seconds, earnestly and intently, at the oncoming launch. Then he shrugged his shoulders and squatted down again, in a most despondent attitude, and said no more.

## CHAPTER X

### A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT

"BILLY!" whispered Dan, drawing his brother away to the stern, where he began to fumble around the engine.

"What's the matter with you?" snapped the younger boy.

"Don't you see?" gasped Dan.

"See what?" grunted his brother. For some reason Billy seemed much put out.

"He's the escaped prisoner—the man from Meadville!" murmured Dan, under his breath.

Billy was silent a moment. To Dan's surprise he made no comment at all and the older youth said:

"Don't you see we're in a mess?"

"I see we've lost the race!" exclaimed Billy.

"Oh—yes—the race," murmured Dan, peering again forward so that he could see both the man and the black launch. "Do you see this other craft?"

"Yes," admitted Billy.

"They want us. They want the man, in fact!"

"That's the big warden of the prison in the

bow. I recognize him," said Billy. "Mr. McDow!"

"Why, you don't seem surprised by all this," cried Dan.

"I'm thinking," muttered Billy.

"It's too bad. We shall have to let them have the man. Perhaps he won't thank us for saving him. Think of having to go back to that awful place——"

Billy started and opened his lips. Then, after glancing at his brother's face, he closed his mouth again without uttering a word.

The black launch steamed nearer. The man who had been all but drowned still crouched down saying nothing. He neither looked at the boys nor at the approaching launch.

"Hi, there!" shouted the stentorian voice of the prison warden. "We want to see that fellow you fished out."

"Here he is," said Dan, shortly, pointing to the man.

The black launch rubbed her nose along the *Red Arrow's* side, but did no damage to the varnish, she was handled so well. Mr. McDow and another man in a blue suit leaped aboard.

"Why, hullo!" said McDow. "You are the Speedwell boys, I declare! Do you know anything about this man?"

"Of course they don't, Warden," said his com-

panion. "You saw that they were racing with that other launch! And they would have won, too, if they hadn't stopped to pick up this fellow."

"Sorry you lost the game, then, boys," said the warden, with rough sympathy. "But it certainly was smart of you to pick up Gedney, here."

Already the other officer had stepped to the side of the half-drowned man. There was the sharp snap of handcuffs, and then the officer lifted to his feet the big prisoner—shackled to his own wrist.

"That came near being your finish, Gedney," said this officer, to the runaway. "Lucky those boys fished you out, eh?"

"I don't know about that," returned the prisoner, hoarsely.

"He's the man; eh?" chuckled McDow, peering into the gray face of the shivering prisoner.

The other officer lifted the left hand of the convict and displayed the horseshoe scar.

"No mistaking him, I reckon," he said, easily. "But he does look bad; eh?"

"He scarcely looks like the same man who occupied cell nine hundred and forty-seven," retorted McDow.

"Had a hard time, have you, Gedney?" asked the subordinate officer.

The prisoner nodded. He took his recapture very quietly.

"Sorry we broke into your race, boys," said the warden again.

Billy grunted: "We'd have beaten that *Crow Flight* if this hadn't happened."

"Oh, well," said the deputy, "you'll have a chance to try conclusions with the other launch on New Year's Day. You'll be in those races, of course."

"Not us," said Dan, quickly. "We can't race."

The prisoner for the first time turned his face toward the boys and appeared to be listening.

"Why not?" asked McDow, as he beckoned the other launch to approach so they could take the convict aboard, it having drifted off.

"We don't own the *Red Arrow*. She belongs to Mr. Asa Craig——"

"Hullo!" ejaculated McDow, looking at him sharply. Then he turned to his prisoner. "Hear that, Gedney?" he asked.

The recaptured convict said nothing.

"Funny you should have been saved from drowning by these boys in your own cousin's boat. Huh! very funny, indeed," said McDow.

But the deputy warden asked Dan:

"Why can't you sail in the races, even if you don't own the launch?"

"It's against the club rules. Either the owner of the launch must belong to the Colasha Boat

Club, or he must sail his boat himself, or directly appoint a substitute as sailing master of his craft."

"Won't he appoint you his representative?"

"We don't know where he is," said Dan, when Billy secretly jerked his sleeve and the older boy was surprised to see his brother vigorously shaking his head at him. Dan did not understand, but he refrained from saying anything more.

The black launch came close. Together, McDow and the deputy got Gedney aboard. The latter never looked at the Speedwells; he had never opened his lips to thank them for saving him from drowning. Perhaps, after all, he was not thankful for that mercy!

Dan, evidently, thought of this as he started the engine of the *Red Arrow* again. He murmured:

"And he's got to go back to that awful place. I wonder——"

"What do you wonder?" demanded Billy, standing idly near. There was no use in going down to the boat club anchorage and let Chance Avery and the rest crow over them.

"I wonder why that fellow did such a thing," said Dan, thoughtfully.

"You mean the thing that got him into jail?"

"Yes. They say it's for arson. Twenty years. It must have been a very serious crime indeed. Lives must have been endangered—perhaps

sacrificed in the fire he set. And he's Mr. Craig's cousin!"

Billy breathed heavily. His lips opened and shut again, but he could not bring himself to speak.

"I tell you what I think," said Dan, solemnly, as the launch drifted with the slow tide. "Mr. Craig knows all about his cousin's trouble, of course. I don't know as he is to be so much blamed; but I really think Mr. Craig had something to do with this Gedney's escape from Meadville."

"You do?" exclaimed Billy, at last.

"Yes. I believe they signalled each other the day we sailed with Mr. Craig past the walls."

"Huh!"

"You know that the escape of Gedney was discovered just three days thereafter, and Mr. Craig suddenly developed a reason for going away from this neighborhood after the signals were interchanged—and in three days' time."

Billy muttered something to which Dan, following his own train of reasoning, gave no attention.

"It's a complete mystery—I admit that," pursued Dan. "Why, Mr. Craig went away from here the same day his cousin escaped from jail, and all that. And now this Gedney is caught again."

*"Is he?"*

Billy said this suddenly. He stood up and faced his brother, who was likewise standing over the engine. They looked straight at each other, and in Dan's glance there was great surprise.

"What do you mean, Billy-boy?" he cried. "Of course he's recaptured. We saw him taken away."

"We helped a man out of the water and saw him taken away in the warden's launch—yes," said Billy, slowly.

"What under the sun are you getting at?" cried Dan. "Wasn't that the escaped prisoner, Gedney?"

"No," said Billy, briefly. "It was not."

"In pity's name! who was it, then?" gasped Dan.

"It was Mr. Craig! I tell you it was he we saved from the river. He'd shaved. He's scarred his hand as his cousin's is scarred. They look enough alike to fool the prison officers, perhaps, *but he didn't fool me!*"

Dan sat down weakly and let the launch drift. He could not speak for a minute.

## CHAPTER XI

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

"BILLY," his brother finally said, "you can talk all you want to after this about *my* imagination. You've got me lashed to the mast! You're ten miles ahead of me on the Imagination Track, and still galloping! Whew!"

"You don't believe that man that the warden took away from this boat was Mr. Craig?" asked Billy, calmly.

"I most emphatically do not!"

"And he did not look anything like Mr. Craig to you?"

"Why, Billy! it's utterly ridiculous," declared the older Speedwell. "Why should Mr. Craig do such a thing? Change places with his cousin—suffer imprisonment for his crime—go through penal servitude for an act of which he is not guilty? It would be monstrous!"

"I guess so," returned his brother, doggedly. "Just the same, that was Mr. Craig with his face shaved——"

"And his hand deliberately branded!"

"Biff Hardy and I saw his hand before—you know that."

"And you've been doubting your own eyes ever since," said Dan, warmly.

"Did you get a good look at this man's face?" demanded Billy, earnestly.

"The man we fished out of the river?"

"Yes."

"I can't say that I did," admitted his brother.

"Well, I did. More than that, Dan," said Billy, earnestly, "he spoke to me."

"When did he speak to you?" demanded the amazed and puzzled Dan.

"When you told the warden how we were barred out of the races on New Year's Day."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Dan, curiously. "What did he say?"

"His lips just moved—but I heard him," said Billy, earnestly. "He said: 'I'll fix *that* for you!'"

"He said he'd fix it for us? Meaning, of course, that we would be allowed to race?"

"That's what he said."

"I can't believe that, Billy——"

"If Mr. Craig writes and appoints us as his representatives in the race, I reckon you'll believe it," declared Billy, stubbornly.

While Billy steered and Dan ran the engine they had no opportunity for further discussion.

To the older Speedwell this idea Billy had put forward seemed quite foolish. He knew his brother must be mistaken.

Billy took the launch directly to John Bromley's wharf. When they arrived there they found the Greenes' auto and several of the members of the Outing Club on motorcycles, waiting for them.

"Oh, you chumps!" shouted Fisher Greene, when the Speedwells came in and handed over the launch to the boat-keeper. "What did you let Chance beat you for? He's swelled up over it like a turkey."

At this Dan laughed, but Billy was a little heated, especially as Lettie Parker, who was riding with Betty Greene, said:

"I guess they didn't let the *Crow Flight* win on purpose. They would have been glad enough to have beaten her."

But Betty Greene asked Dan:

"How was it? Monroe Stevens says they might not have won if you had stayed in the race."

"Well; Chance Avery doesn't admit that!" interposed Lettie.

"I don't know who would have won. Monroe ran the *Crow Flight* aground at first; and then we went to the help of a man in the water. I don't want to make excuses, but I should not call it a fair race."

"That's what I told them," declared Fisher. "But I don't see why you should have stopped for a fellow who didn't know enough to keep afloat."

The next day—which was the very last day of the old year—Jim Stetson brought them the information from his uncle that he had been unable to get the executive committee of the boat club to change their rule regarding the entries for the races the next day.

"He says that the man who opposed the *Red Arrow* being allowed to compete was Francis Avery," Jim told them.

"Of course! Chance's brother," said Billy.

"That is no more than we would have expected, had we known the superintendent of the Darrington Machine Shops was a member of the committee," added Dan.

"I didn't even know he belonged to the club," remarked Billy.

"Anyhow," Stetson said, "Larry wants to race you again. He doesn't agree with Chance that it was a fair race. He believes the *Crow Flight* can beat the *Arrow*, just the same; but he's eager to have both boats proved out fairly."

"Well, we'll see after New Year's," said Dan.

"But surely you boys will come down to-night with the *Arrow* and join in the parade?" Jim said. "It's going to be the biggest kind of a time."

"I don't know why we should," said Billy, quickly.

But Dan said: "Of course we will. We don't want any of the fellows to think we're sore-headed, Billy."

Billy agreed to that. Besides, everybody was anticipating the lantern fete and it was likely to be the biggest thing of its kind that Riverdale had ever seen—an entirely new way of seeing the Old Year out and the New Year in.

Beside the many lighted craft in the cove, the river-road was speckled with the lamps of automobiles, and when the illuminated string of boats left the Colasha Club headquarters and started up the river, a train of autos kept pace with them along the bank. It was a long to be remembered sight.

Mr. Speedwell drove the boys' mother and the two younger children in the Breton-Melville car, while Dan and Billy had a crowd of their school-fellows with them in the *Red Arrow*. Even Lettie Parker had changed her mind about it, and was glad to be of the party.

The start of the trip up the river had been timed so that the head of the mile-long procession was about to encircle the island when the New Year was ushered in. Commodore Culpepper, in the *Marietta*, gave the signal, and immediately horns were blown, bells were rung, and some guns

were fired—a welcome to the New Year that lasted quite half an hour.

In the midst of the din, and while the *Red Arrow* was turning the upper point of Island Number One, Wiley Moyle, who was with the Speedwells, suddenly exclaimed:

“Hi, Dan! what launch is this? See her coming down stream?”

Speedwell, who was at the wheel of the *Red Arrow*, gave his attention to the approaching craft. It carried only the usual lights and evidently did not belong to the procession.

“Must be a pirate craft,” chuckled Dan. “Hullo! She’s got a searchlight!”

With a sputter, and sudden blaze, the powerful light was turned on. It was in the bow of the unknown launch, and in half a minute the brilliant ray of light was athwart the *Red Arrow*.

“Ahoy, the *Red Arrow*!” shouted a voice.

“Ahoy yourself, and see how you like it!” returned Billy, springing to the port rail.

“That is the *Red Arrow*, isn’t it? And manned by the two Speedwell boys?” came the question.

“Yes, sir!” responded Billy, more respectfully, seeing that it was a gentleman standing in the bow of the strange launch who hailed him.

“All right. Stand by for a letter!” commanded the stranger.

The launch with the searchlight ran past the *Arrow's* stern. The ray of the lamp was shot upwards and the boys saw a flat package skimming through the air, flung by the man in the other launch.

The packet fell into the *Red Arrow* and Wiley Moyle pounced on it. The searchlight was shut off at once and the strange craft disappeared in the darkness outside the line of illuminated launches.

"Hullo! what's this?" demanded Wiley, studying out the superscription on the oil-silk covered packet. "'Mr. Daniel Speedwell'—it's yours, Dan."

He handed it to the helmsman of the *Red Arrow*. Billy approached and waited while Dan unwrapped the sealed packet. Within was an unsealed letter in an ordinary envelope—and it was addressed to the executive committee of the Colasha Boat Club!

With Billy looking over his shoulder Dan read, in a whisper, as follows:

" 'To the Executive Committee

" 'Colasha Boat Club

" 'Riverdale

" 'Gentlemen:—

" 'You are hereby informed that I appoint Daniel Speedwell, of Riverdale, as my representa-

tive and sailing master of my launch *Red Arrow* for the regatta to be held by the Colasha Boat Club on January 1st—New Year's Day.

“ ‘ Respectfully

“ ‘ A. CRAIG.’ ”

“ Now, what do you think of *that*? ” Dan finished, gasping.

But Billy smote him hard on the shoulder, and shouted:

“ What did I tell you, old boy? *He said he'd fix it for us.* ”

## CHAPTER XII

### THE REGATTA

DAN had no chance to reply to this, for the others crowded around to learn what the packet flung aboard the *Red Arrow* from the unknown launch, was about.

"All we can tell you *now*," said Dan, with a meaning glance at his brother, and displaying the letter enclosed in its addressed envelope. "is what you see written here."

The last launch in the procession passed into the cove before the brilliantly illuminated boat-house at one o'clock. Then there were more refreshments, and a dance for the older folks. Dan and Billy moored the *Red Arrow* and went ashore to hunt up the Commodore.

They found Colonel Culpepper easily enough; but as the boys drew near he was speaking with Francis Avery.

The latter scowled—as he always did—when the Speedwells approached.

"You are the boys who are running that launch for Mr. Craig, are you not?" asked the com-

modore, who was a jovial, red-faced man, and prided himself upon knowing everybody about Riverdale.

"Yes, sir, we are," said Dan.

"Well, I am sorry to say that the rules of the executive committee are final, and there seems to be a feeling in the committee that it would be setting a bad precedent to change the rules just for you."

"We could not expect them to do that," agreed Dan, quietly.

"I should say not!" muttered Mr. Avery.  
"And now, Colonel——"

"Sorry, boys," said the commodore, and he was turning away with Mr. Avery when Dan interposed:

"Please wait a moment, sir. We have something to show you," and he held out the letter they had come by so strangely.

The commodore took it, saw how it was addressed, and exclaimed:

"What's this, boys? An appeal to the committee?" and he laughed. "We were just going in to them."

"Please take that to them," Dan replied. "It is our credential from Mr. Craig."

"From Asa Craig?" cried the commodore, and drew out the letter and opened it. He read it at a glance.

“Good!” Colonel Culpepper said, heartily. “This will satisfy the committee, I am sure.”

He passed the paper to Mr. Avery. That gentleman took it and stared angrily at the letter.

“Humph!” he said. “How do we know this is ‘A. Craig’s’ signature? These boys are altogether too anxious to race.”

“Oh, tut, tut!” cried the good natured Commodore. “Of course it’s all right, Avery. How ridiculous!”

“I don’t know that it is ridiculous——” began the superintendent of the Darrington Machine Shops, when Billy interrupted, and in some anger:

“You don’t have to believe it, Mr. Avery! Dan, show the commodore those other papers. They won’t believe that we forged Mr. Craig’s name to them, too, I hope.”

“Now, now, young man! Take it easy,” advised the commodore, accepting the bill of sale and letter which Mr. Craig had left for the boys when he went away. “I see,” he added, reading them hastily. “These surely, seem valid. Look here, Avery: The two signatures are identical.”

“I haven’t any interest in the matter,” sneered Avery, and walked away.

“It’s all right, boys,” the commodore delayed long enough to say to the Speedwells, before following his fellow-member of the committee into

the other room. "I'll see that your launch is entered among the contestants."

"Some day," Dan said, privately to Billy, "we are going to have one grand row with Francis and Chanceford Avery."

"We've had many already," complained Billy. "I think they are about the meanest people who ever came into Riverdale."

"I hate to have anything to do with them; but how can we help it?" said Dan. "I'm sure we don't seek to cross their way."

"But Chance puts himself out to get into our way!" cried Billy.

As he spoke they turned a corner of the corridor and came instantly to a group of their own school-fellows, with the lame youth, Lawrence Stetson, and Chance Avery, as well. And from the angry flush on the younger Avery's face it was certain that he had heard the final words of the brothers, at least!

"So I get in your way, do I?" he demanded. "It isn't likely, however, that I shall be much in your way in the races to-day!" and he laughed loudly.

Dan and Billy passed out of the club house then, and made no explanation. They immediately got aboard the launch and drove her up to John Bromley's wharf. The old man was in bed, and sound asleep, of course. The boys

had to tie up the *Red Arrow* and then fastened the canvas cover at the bow and drew it back, lashing the points as they worked, and so covered all inboard from the weather.

This took some minutes and by the time they were a-straddle of their motorcycles and homeward bound, it was already time to think of the chores around the dairy barn.

"Never mind; we'll be better off than those folks who stay there at the club house and dance till daylight," said Dan. "Some of those fellows, after parading that waxed floor with the girls all night, won't feel much like racing boats to-morrow afternoon. And we'll get some hours of sleep before dinner."

As Dan said this they were mounting the hill from the old wharf and fishhouse. Billy was about to respond in like manner when he heard something that made him shut off his own power.

"Wait, Dan!" he cried, and his brother immediately stopped the engine of his Flying Feather.

"Listen!" commanded Billy, stepping off his wheel.

Below, on the river road, they could hear the steady popping of a third motorcycle. It was drawing near and coming rapidly—and from the direction of Riverdale.

"If anything should happen to the *Red Arrow*

while Mr. Craig's away, we would be blamed," said Dan, as the unknown motorcyclist was heard to stop at the wharf.

"And Chance Avery is as mad as a hatter over the fact that we're going to race the launch this afternoon."

Before Billy ceased speaking Dan had leaned his motorcycle against a boulder beside the road, and started back down the hill.

But Billy thought he knew a trick worth two of that! He turned his own motorcycle about, leaped aboard, and began to coast down the road. He soon left Dan behind, and came spinning down upon the lower road at a fast pace. His wheel made some noise, however, and before he was in sight of the dock he heard somebody running over the loose boards.

Flashing around the last clump of trees that hid the river road and the head of Bromley's dock, Billy saw a figure darting along the side of the highway away from the place. But he came a cropper over the handlebars of his own wheel, having shut down the brake too abruptly.

"There he goes!" yelled the fallen Billy, as his brother came panting to the bottom of the hill.

The unknown, however, had mounted his own wheel and now the popping of his engine could be heard as he made off in the direction of Riverdale.

The boys ran back upon the wharf. As they did so there came to their nostrils the pungent smell of smoke!

"There's a fire!" gasped Billy.

Dan bounded ahead. He reached the string piece of the wharf, and the canvas covered launch was just below him. Smoke was rising from near the engine, where a slit had been made in the covering which—but a few minutes before—the Speedwells had so carefully fastened down.

"The scoundrel!" shouted Dan, and leaped down into the *Red Arrow*.

Billy followed him and together they tore off the canvas. A bunch of oily waste was burning briskly, but so soon after the incendiary had they arrived that nothing but the waste was yet ablaze.

Billy grabbed the bucket, Dan pushed the burning waste into it with the boathook, and in a moment the bucket was over-side and the fire quenched.

"There's only one fellow in Riverdale who would do such a thing," sputtered Billy. "I'd like to thrash him within an inch of his life!"

They had some difficulty in arousing the fisherman; but when once they had done so, and showed him the attempt that had been made to destroy the *Red Arrow*, Old John knew just what to do.

"I'll sleep aboard of her, boys," he declared. "It's the launch they're after, is it? Then they

won't do much to her when I'm right on the craft. You boys go home and don't worry yourselves. The *Red Arrow* is as safe as can be."

The Speedwells were refreshed by a long morning's sleep and did not run down to Bromley's dock until an hour or so before the races were called at the boat club cove. They had arranged for John Bromley to put the launch in good shape, and found her as spick and span as possible. The fire had done no damage.

Down the river they sped to the meeting point of the racing launches just outside the boat club moorings. There were nearly a hundred craft to compete in the several events, and the committee in charge had already classified them and announced the handicaps and rules.

The short stretches did not interest the Speedwells enough to tempt them to try the *Red Arrow* in them. Besides, Dan believed that Mr. Craig's launch would do better over a longer course.

Mr. Stetson's *Crow Flight* was entered in one of the short races, and won over her own class—and won easily. This success the Speedwells knew would encourage Chance Avery to believe that he had the fastest power boat on the river.

The short-distance races were carried through first, for the throng that had come to see them could observe the entire length of the course without moving from their places. But when the race

to the Meadville Bridge and return was announced, the automobiles, motorcycles, and many carriages began to string out along the river road, the crowd intent upon not only seeing the start of the twenty-two launches entered for the chief contest of the regatta, but desirous of watching the course of the race.

This twenty-mile race was a matter of endurance and skill; no swift and lucky dash would put victory in the hands of any contestant.

There was some manœuvering to get the launches in line. The river was wide and there needed to have been no crowding; but just as the committee had about formed the line straight (each launch being under headway enough to counterbalance the outgoing tide and current) Chance Avery, who was at the wheel of the *Crow Flight*, deliberately tried to ram the *Speedwells* in the *Red Arrow*. The Stetson launch, being so much heavier than Mr. Craig's, might have done some serious damage to the lighter craft had not Billy sheered the *Red Arrow* off with no little skill.

"You wait!" yelled the hot-tempered Billy, shaking his fist at Chance, who was grinning at him. "When this race is over you'll either have to beat me, or I'll beat you!"

At the moment the starter's pistol cracked, and the line of launches shot ahead. Dan opened his throttle, but Billy's attention had been divided and

the *Red Arrow* started from the line on a curve instead of straight ahead. The Speedwells found themselves within the first two minutes among the few lagging craft, while the *Crow Flight* was darting up the river with the speedier launches, and some cable lengths ahead!

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE WINNING SPURT

It was a chilly day and the sky was overcast. As the *Red Arrow* sped up stream in the race with the other craft, the cold wind whistled past, and the spray that soon began to come inboard from the ridge of water cast up ahead of her bows was icy and stung faces and hands.

Billy was sheltered at the wheel; but every time Dan stood up to watch their own course and that of the other launches in the race, he received a baptism of icy drops and his coat was soon wet. The river was ruffled just enough to make it bad traveling. The *Red Arrow*, however, ploughed on as easily as ever she did in perfectly smooth water.

The Speedwells were not at the very tail of the procession; but they could count more than half of the twenty-two contestants ahead of them when they were two or three miles from the starting point. And the launch on which they particularly had their eyes—the *Crow Flight*—was far ahead indeed.

“Push her on! Push her on, do!” yelled Billy,

looking back for an instant at his calmer brother.

"Never you mind—keep your eye on the course," advised Dan. "You make her wobble when you look back."

"Why, we're merely crawling!" retorted Billy.

"We're doing fourteen knots, flat. Wait till the engine warms up good."

"Only fourteen!" shrieked the younger lad. "Then we *are* crawling."

With the wind so keen it seemed as though they must be going far faster than Dan said. But little by little, the older boy opened her up, and the *Red Arrow* began to pass some of the less powerful craft.

She had a pretty race with the Crawleys' *Poppinjay*—a mahogany finished launch with brass-work galore, the latest thing in power craft and altogether a fancy boat. The son of the bank president, who ran the *Poppinjay* himself, handled her with some skill.

All but five of the boats were astern when the nose of the *Red Arrow* drew slowly, but steadily, past the stern of the *Poppinjay*. The Speedwells were by that time doing sixteen and one-half knots, and doing it easily.

On and on they dashed, the spindrift flying over the boat in a continual shower. The rival launch was doing its very best, while the *Red Arrow* was steadily forging ahead.

Dan and Billy saw the chagrined countenance of Crawley looking at them. He caught up a megaphone and shouted to the boys:

"Chance Avery told me your boat was a frost! What you been doing to her?"

But Dan only laughed, and waved his hand as the *Red Arrow* finally showed the *Poppinjay* the wake of her propeller. It had been no spurt; the *Red Arrow* was still a long way from doing her best.

"What does she register?" bawled Billy, from the wheel.

"Seventeen and a fraction," returned his brother.

"Oh, let her out—do!" begged the younger lad.

"Now, hold your horses," retorted Dan.  
"We're doing very well."

The *Crow Flight* was only two places in advance of them. But when the *Red Arrow* had passed another launch, the Stetson craft was still in the same relative position—and she was the third craft in the race!

The *Red Arrow* was doing eighteen and one-half knots as she drew past the fourth launch from the head of the procession. In truth the two head craft were racing bow and bow, and now the *Crow Flight* was evidently trying to reach the two ahead.

On and on they dashed. The suspension bridge

was crowded with spectators, and the shore on either side was lined with autos and carriages. The interest in the rounding of the stake, set just beyond the bridge, was intense.

The *Comet* and the *Capitan* almost collided as they swept around the mark. They had been racing so long for advantage that neither crew was willing to give way an inch. Their mix-up gave the *Crow Flight* some advantage. Although she did not round the stake first, she came back under the bridge just about at the head of the contestants.

As she swept from under the bridge the *Red Arrow* passed her like a shot. Dan had opened her wide and the *Red Arrow* seemed to leap through the water.

Billy leaned far out and yelled at Chance Avery, whose surprised face showed at the wheel of the other craft:

"We'll get you now, Avery! We'll get you now!"

"I hope your pride won't have a fall, Billy-boy," muttered Dan. He did not believe himself in "shouting till they were out of the woods!"

The *Red Arrow* swept around the stake in grand style. She passed the *Comet* drifting under the bridge while her mechanic worked madly over the engine. The *Capitan* and *Crow Flight* had gone on, and were fighting as hard for place

as ever the *Capitan* and *Comet* had, coming up the river.

Dan Speedwell stuck to his own certain plan. He would not force the *Red Arrow* to the top speed, although he had opened her wide for a minute as they passed under the bridge. Now he reduced her a little, for she felt the force of the current and the out-going tide.

They spun down stream, wind and current aiding. They passed most of the launches that had remained in the race, within a few cable-lengths of the bridge. Soon the river was clear, saving the pleasure boats that had followed the race, the police launch, and the *Capitan* and *Crow Flight* fighting in the lead.

Billy leaned from the wheel and shouted to his brother:

"Are we moving, Dan?"

"Just a little."

"What does she register?"

"Nineteen and a fraction."

"Oh, for the love of Peter," gasped Billy.

"Let her out! Let her out!"

But Dan Speedwell would not be hurried. The *Red Arrow* was working smoothly, and Dan knew she was gaining!

Slowly—very slowly—they drew up on the *Capitan* and *Crow Flight*. So excited were the crews of those two launches that they paid no at-

tention to the third one in the race. Even Chance Avery did not realize that the Speedwells were directly in the rear of the *Crow Flight*.

Mile after mile sped by. The people driving along the river road cheered the leading contestants madly. The crowd seemed about equally divided between friends of the *Capitan* and of the Stetson launch. Occasionally a stray cheer was heard for the Speedwell boys; but from the shore it really looked as though the race lay entirely between the first two craft.

Once the *Comet* tried to recover her place, but Dan did not put on any extra speed and the *Comet* soon fell back. There remained after that a long space between the stern of the *Red Arrow* and the next following boats. Ahead the *Capitan* and *Crow Flight* led by perhaps a cable's length.

Of course, Dan Speedwell might have let out at first and perhaps been among the leaders from the start. But the longer any piece of delicate mechanism, like the engine of the *Red Arrow*, is forced at high pressure, the greater the danger of accident. He had worked her up gradually, had watched her every minute, and had detected nothing in her action to cause him the first anxiety.

They came to the head of Island Number One.

The general understanding was that the launches should go up on the far side of the island and return on the right side of the river; but

there was no rule to that effect. The way was clear on both sides of the long and narrow strip of sand and scrub.

Dan suddenly yelled to Billy and waved him to turn out to the far side. The younger Speedwell obeyed. They shot down the course and soon the scrubby growth of trees along the hog-back of the island hid the *Red Arrow* from the spectators on the shore—and from the leading contestants in the race.

It was then that Dan opened her wide and forced the power launch to her very highest speed. He had seen Mr. Craig do the same, and he knew about what they ought to get out of her.

With wind and tide in their favor it really seemed as though the launch left the water!

She left a streak of foam behind her that attested the speedy revolution of her propeller; but for the time there was no other craft near with which to compare the *Red Arrow's* pace.

The island passed them like a panoramic scene. The boat jumped and the engine throbbed, and every stick and plank was trembling with the action of the machinery.

The launch went faster than at any time in which the Speedwells had been with her. It seemed but a few seconds before she appeared from behind the island, to the amazed eyes of the spectators ahead of the *Capitan* and *Crow*

*Flight*, and traveling on, down the stream to the starting point, in a spurt that was bound to win!

It was too late for Chance Avery—or anybody else—to try and equal the pace of the *Red Arrow*. Indeed, the *Capitan* and *Crow Flight* were already doing their best. As the *Red Arrow* passed them at a distance those two launches were still bow and bow in the race.

The Speedwells shot under the Long Bridge and through the cleared space between it and the starter's boat. The spectators had already begun to cheer and a great cry of "*Red Arrow! Speedwell!*" drowned the other congratulatory cheers.

The other boats lying around the anchorage began to whistle, and a deafening explosion of sound welcomed the Speedwell boys as they ran their launch past the commodore's *Marietta*, and Dan shut off the power while Billy swept her in a wide circle back to the starting point.

## CHAPTER XIV

### WILD MAN'S ISLAND


AN outsider had won the twenty-mile race and the silver trophy!

There were members of the Colasha Boat Club who expressed themselves vigorously on this point. Had it been anybody else who had won but the Speedwells the feeling would have been the same. That was a very handsome cup to go out of the club's possession.

"Boys, we shall certainly expect you to join the club," declared Commodore Culpepper, when he presented the prize to Dan and Billy. "You and your launch are acquisitions that we must have."

"Unfortunately we have no launch," replied Dan, respectfully. "This cup belongs to Mr. Asa Craig. If we are ever able to own such a craft we shall surely apply for membership."

"And get handsomely blackballed by Chance Avery and his friends," muttered Billy, in his brother's ear, after the ceremony. "Did you



see how Chance looked when we all came into the cove? ”

“ I didn't dare look at him,” chuckled Dan. “ It was a mighty beating, Billy.”

“ I should say it was! And Chance is ripe for almost any mean trick to get square with us.”

Larry Stetson, however, was a good loser. He was vastly disappointed in the performance of launch; but he did not blame Chance for their failure to win the race and beat the Speedwells.

It was Larry who proposed the trip to Wild Man's Island that last week of the New Year holidays, and he sent a special invitation to the Speedwells by his cousin, Jim.

“ We're going to have a great blow-out, Dan,” said Jim, with enthusiasm. “ Uncle will put up for it. There's an old cabin down on the island, you know; that's for the girls and Mrs. Reeve to stay in; we fellows can bunk any old place—in the launches, if we like. You'll bring your *Red Arrow*, and there'll be the *Crow Flight* and Mr. Stevens' *Hashimura*. There's a big crowd going.”

The brothers were quite as anxious to be of the party as was Jim himself. The latter and his sister, Ruth, begged the privilege of going with the Speedwells, and of course, Mildred and Lettie, likewise chose to sail on the *Red Arrow*. Altogether, the little launch had a company of

twelve when the three craft left the boat club cove early on the morning of the third of January.

Wild Man's Island was beyond the break-water, and south from the entrance to the great bay into which the Colasha River emptied. Indeed, the island was more than thirty miles from the port of Barnegat and was a rocky isle, with few trees upon it, no regular inhabitants, and as wild and deserted a spot as could be found along the entire stretch of the North American coast.

At this season of the year, however, it was a very picturesque place, the fishing was fine, and if the weather remained as warm and steady as it had been for ten days, this mid-winter trip was bound to be most enjoyable. Mr. Evan Stetson's housekeeper was of the party, to take care of the girls, and Dan and Billy got John Bromley to go along to help cook, and show the crowd the best fishing grounds around Wild Man's Island.

Old John had fished the river, bay and neighboring waters from boyhood, and when Billy got him to talking for the benefit of the merry young people aboard the *Red Arrow*, they were all vastly entertained.

"This here Wild Man's Island we're bound for, now," observed John. "Why, it's just as lonesome and scareful a spot as any of these here Robinson Crusoes ye hear tell about ever found in the South Seas. Wild men? Huh! there

wasn't never any tribe of 'em on it," he added, in answer to an adroitly-put query by Billy.

"But there was one wild man—yes, sir! and as far as I know, although he has not been seen for ears, he's there yet."

"Oh!" squealed Lettie. "And maybe he'll come out and chase us off the island."

"Mebbe he will," chuckled Old John. "But I reckon he is harmless enough."

"But you don't mean to say, John, that the wild man is still on the island?" asked Billy. "I thought he had not been seen in years."

"Ain't been—not in ten years or more," said Bromley.

"Then you don't know he's there," said Billy.

"And I don't know he ain't. Nobody ever took him off. He never got away from there, as anybody knows."

But Old John's eyes were twinkling and they all knew that he really thought differently from that. Perhaps, as Dan suggested, the wild man had fallen off the rocks and been drowned.

"At any rate," said Billy, "if he hasn't been seen for ten years he's not likely to show up for our especial benefit."

When they came in sight of the island it was indeed a rugged and wild-looking place. There was quite an eminence at one end of the islet, and this hill, or mountain, was of steep and broken

rocks, and without "ten cents worth of green stuff on it!" as Billy Speedwell declared.

In this mountain were the caves, washed out of the soft sandstone ages past by the action of high tides and terrific storms which then beat upon this coast.

Elsewhere there were a few groves of trees, and many pleasant lawns and pastures. Once some squatter had pastured herds of sheep on Wild Man's Island, and there were still to be traced the lines of the sheepfolds, and a big log cabin was still standing. Within a few years some party of fishermen had re-roofed the cabin and spent a summer on the island. So the party of picnics from Riverdale were sure of a decent shelter on land, should a storm come up suddenly.

There was an almost land-locked cove, and good anchorage at the island. Indeed, Dan and Billy found an almost docking place for the *Red Arrow*. She was moored to a tree on shore, and lay in a narrow inlet where the bank was so high that one might leap aboard with ease.

Old John Bromley's story of the wild man did not trouble their fancies in the least. They were positive that there was nobody on the island but themselves.

Therefore Dan and Billy agreed to camp aboard the *Crow Flight* with the other fellows,

while both the *Hashimura* and the *Red Arrow* were unoccupied for the night.

In the cabin of the *Crow Flight* the rest of the crowd of boys played jokes on each other, and laughed, and talked, and told stories until midnight. For Dan and Billy there would not have been a single flaw in the enjoyment of the occasion, had it not been for the presence of Chanceford Avery.

They could have ignored him, at that; but Chance would not let them alone. He did not succeed in annoying Dan so much; but Billy was more easily angered. Besides, Billy paid for his threat that he made at the regatta when Chance had tried to bump the *Red Arrow* with the Stetson launch.

"I believe you're going to beat me, eh Billy?" he kept saying, digging the smaller boy in the ribs and laughing at him. "When's this fight you promised me coming off?" And he kept up this form of teasing before the girls, as well. Oh, Billy paid heavily for losing his temper on that occasion!

At length, however, Chance became so unpleasant that some of the older boys took the matter up.

"Let it alone, Avery!" advised Monroe Stevens. "Kill it, do! If you want to nag a fellow, why don't you nag Dan? He'd be glad to

have you pitch into him, I know," and Monroe grinned wickedly.

Chance made no attempt to get into a row with Dan Speedwell, however, and the latter ignored him. Dan believed that Billy had brought the unpleasantness upon himself, and he would not interfere as long as Avery merely exercised his wit on Billy.

It marred the evening's enjoyment, however, and Dan and Billy both secretly wished they had slept aboard the *Red Arrow*.

In the morning, however, all this was forgotten. The sun rose clear and there was a stiff breeze. Old John declared it would be an admirable morning for fish on the outer bank.

"This breeze will die out by nine o'clock. If a fog doesn't come in, it will be all right. Now, you boys hustle around and I'll show ye all how to rig tackle."

Old John went on Larry Stetson's boat. That, and the *Hashimura*, got off soon after breakfast. There were several boys then left to accompany Dan and Billy on the *Red Arrow*.

The Speedwells had been so busy helping the others and getting off the fishing parties in the other craft that they had not even gone to Mr. Craig's launch since getting up. It was so hidden among the rocks that neither from the cove side, nor from the shore, could it be seen until one

came right upon the little inlet where it was moored.

And, to the amazement and distress of Dan and Billy, when they came to the hidden place where the launch had been so safely moored, she had disappeared.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN THE FOG

JIM STETSON and Wiley Moyle heard the Speedwells cry out in surprise, as they came running to the spot.

"Who—who took the launch?" spluttered Jim.

"Why, however did it float away?" demanded Wiley.

Their surprise was too genuine to be questioned. Both Dan and Billy knew that this catastrophe was no joke that had been played upon them. None of their chums had towed the *Red Arrow* away from the spot where they had so carefully tied her the evening before.

Besides, Dan had the end of the hawser, still fast to the tree, in his hand, and he was assured by his first scrutiny that the rope had been cut!

"She's been cut adrift!" cried Jim Stetson.

"She most certainly has," returned Dan.

"Or else she's sunk right where she lay," said Billy.

But when he ran to the edge of the steep bank he saw that the bottom of the inlet was plainly

visible. The launch was most certainly not there!

"And the *Crow Flight* and Steven's launch are outside the cove now," said Wiley.

"Why, she must have been cut adrift in the night," Jim added. "The tide turned about four. If she drifted, instead of being taken away under her own power——"

"We'd have been awakened in the other launch if her engine had been started," interrupted Dan.

"So we would! Why, she must have drifted then," declared Jim.

Jim Stetson scrambled up a rocky eminence just back from the spot where the launch had been moored. He carried a pair of good field glasses in a case, slung over his shoulder, and with these he began to scan the sea as soon as he reached the top of the hill.

"Come up here, Dan!" he yelled, after a minute.

The older Speedwell obeyed the summons, and quickly reached his friend's side.

"Look here! what do you make of it?" asked Jim, passing Dan the glasses. "You can see the *Crow Flight* and the *Hashimura*, making off easterly for the outer bank. But down south, yonder, there's a speck that must be a boat, and it has neither a sail, nor any steam or smoke rising from her. What do you think of it?"

Dan looked long and earnestly at the speck indicated. The glasses, when he got them adjusted properly to his sight, revealed more than a speck.

"It's the *Red Arrow*—I'm sure!" said Dan, confidently. "And she is just drifting. There's nobody aboard of her, but she's safe yet."

"Safe!" shouted Billy, who, with Wiley, had followed his brother and Jim. "How can she be safe when she's clear out there, and we can't get at her?"

"And those on the other launches don't know she's there—they can't see her. She'll drift all day without their being any the wiser."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Billy. "Somebody aboard the *Crow Flight* or the *Hashimura*, knows that the *Red Arrow* is adrift."

Jim and Wiley were silent. They believed Billy was right. But Dan only said, quickly:

"Come! no use standing here talking. We've got to *do* something."

"What?" demanded Billy.

"There's the yawl," returned Dan. "I'm glad Larry insisted on towing it out here now, although we really didn't need it to get the ladies ashore."

"Row after that launch!" gasped Jim. "You wouldn't reach her all day."

"She has a sail and short mast. I know how

to rig it," said Dan, briefly, and without handing back the glasses he hurried down the hill again.

Billy was right behind him; but the others hung back. The idea of starting out on the ocean in such a little cockle-shell of a craft as the tender, did not appeal to either Stetson or Wiley Moyle.

But the Speedwells did not expect them to offer to go. The yawl was small, and two in her were sufficient. Dan and Billy were both familiar with sailing boats, and they felt no fear—only for the safety of the launch that Mr. Craig had left in their care.

Within a quarter of an hour Dan had stepped the mast, they bent on the sail, and pushed off from the shore of the cove. The other boys wished them well, and Wiley even came running down from the cabin with his hands full of cold victuals which he tossed into the bow of the yawl. There was already a jug aboard, that Jim had filled at the spring back of the cabin.

The yawl sailed splendidly. They got through the narrow inlet and breasted the Atlantic rollers very well indeed. The yawl rode the swells like a duck, and the fair wind was with them.

The brothers said little to each other regarding the suspicious circumstances surrounding the setting adrift of the *Red Arrow*. Their minds, indeed, were given up to anxiety about the present safety of the launch. What could they say to

Mr. Craig if the *Red Arrow* were lost? Although it had not gone adrift through any fault of theirs, neither Dan nor Billy could excuse themselves entirely. They should have remained aboard the craft at night—especially when she had been moored so far from the other two launches.

Dan had borrowed Jim Stetson's glasses, and now and then he stood up and tried to descry the speck dancing on the waves which he had been sure was the drifting *Red Arrow*; but it was an hour before he managed to pick her up with the glasses.

"We're on the right tack," he assured his brother. "And she isn't so many miles away now. If this breeze will only hold."

But the wind was growing fitful. It came in puffs now, and there began to be long calms between, when the sail of the yawl hung idle. There was a fast-increasing haze on the horizon to the east, too.

"Is that fog, do you suppose, Dannie?" queried Billy, at last.

"I expect it is, old man," agreed his brother. "If we could only get to the launch first——"

"Shall we use the oars?"

"We wouldn't catch her all day, as Jim said. Perhaps a wind will come up ahead of the fog—I certainly hope so."

But it did not. Before the smother of mist rolled down upon the yawl, she had become becalmed, and the Speedwells had to take to the long oars.

They were good scullers and they were not afraid of work; but very soon Dan stopped pulling and shouted to Billy to do the same.

"It's no use," he declared. "We don't know how we're heading—and if the wind comes up again and isn't sufficient to scatter this fog, we'll be in a nice fix. I have no idea of the points of the compass—have you?"

"Why—er—the island lies behind us——"

"It did lie behind us," interrupted Dan; "but since we have been pulling in the fog we may have headed the boat half way around the other way—don't you see? We'd better keep still until the fog lifts."

"Why, Dan, if the wind springs up we'll not dare to take advantage of it!" cried Billy. "We might sail right away from the *Red Arrow*."

"And right slap into the rocks, perhaps," added the older boy.

Their situation was indeed serious. The fact that they should not have put out from shore without a compass was indelibly impressed upon the minds of Dan and Billy Speedwell. But this discovery did not in the least aid them in their present difficulty.

## CHAPTER XVI

### WHO CUT THE HAWSER?

LEFT to himself, Billy Speedwell might have done that very thing—pulled away madly into the fog without knowing where he was headed. But cautious Dan advised just drifting, and waiting for the fog to lift.

But this was no easy task—when they were so anxious regarding the fate of the *Red Arrow*. While they were in the fog, the launch was likewise at the mercy of the tide.

“And suppose she should be run under by a steamer, or some sailing vessel bound up the coast?” suggested Billy. “We’re in one awful mess with that launch, Dan!”

“That we surely are. Even if she is seen, and saved by some larger vessel, we’ll have salvage to pay. I don’t see but that we are up against it, Billy, whatever happens to her.”

For the fog grew thicker and thicker. It was a heavy dank mass of mist that settled down upon the heaving ocean. The boys knew that another

craft might pass them in this smother, ten yards away, and they know nothing about them.

"The boys certainly were good to remember this grub and the water," said Billy, with his mouth full. "But say!" he added, suddenly. "Maybe we ought to divide this stuff into several days' rations. How do we know how long we'll be drifting about out here without means of getting ashore?"

"I guess we needn't worry much yet," said Dan, cheerfully.

Nevertheless both of them secretly put aside a part of the cold meat and bread, and were careful of the drinking water.

The hours dragged slowly by. Noon came finally; then one; then two o'clock. At last a breath of air stirred through the fog bank. The sail began to fill. The wind came in puffs at first, and finally began to blow steadily. But it did not blow away the fog.

"We'll have to drop the sail, Billy," Dan said, sadly.

"Might as well go along with the wind as to lie here," grumbled the younger lad.

"I don't think so," retorted Dan.

"We don't know where we are anyway!" cried Billy.

"No—that's a fact. But we have some idea of our position—it's not so far from the island.

I'd rather be lost in our wood lot than in the Rocky Mountains," and Dan chuckled.

Suddenly Dan stood up and told Billy to keep quiet. He strained his ears to listen to some sound he had heard in the fog, and Billy tried to make it out, too.

It was a strange rushing noise, and it came down wind like the voice of the breeze itself. The latter grew stronger and seemed to whistle past them with increasing force each second. While, borne on the wings of the wind, came the growing sound—like the rushing of many waters.

"A storm, eh?" queried Billy, falteringly.

"No."

"Not a squall coming?"

"No, sir!" repeated Dan, earnestly.

"My goodness, Dannie!" exclaimed Billy, in no little fear. "What can it be? I never heard anything like it——"

"Stand ready to jump, Billy!" yelled Dan, grabbing him and shouting in his ear.

The noise drowned every other sound. Some huge bulk seemed swooping down upon them out of the fog. The curtain of mist trembled and shook. A mighty shadow thickened it to star-board. The boys, standing in the pitching yawl, clung to each other in terror and looked up into the smother of fog where the outline of a great shape now appeared!

"What is it?" shrieked the younger lad.

"A ship!" cried Dan.

And, as he spoke, the fog cloud seemed to burst asunder and there appeared, towering over them—seemingly hanging directly over the yawl—the foremast and yards of a big vessel. She was careened far over and was coming up with the wind (it seemed to the Speedwells) as fast as the *Red Arrow* could have sailed under most favorable circumstances.

The boys could do nothing to avert the peril that threatened them, and they could not speak after the vessel burst out of the smother of mist. It seemed as though the yawl must be cut under by the prow of the ship, against which the waves slapped so viciously. The noise of the wind in the vessel's canvas, and the breaking of the waters against her hull, had been the combination of sounds which had so startled and puzzled the Speedwells.

For a minute, or more, it seemed as though the vast bulk of the flying ship overhung them. They saw men at her rail, well nigh over their heads, peering down upon the tossing yawl and its two occupants.

Then, with a vast creaking of spars, shrieking of the wind through the rigging, and the slapping of the waves against the ship's side, she heaved up, and stood hung in the wind so near that the

boys could have tossed a pebble against her hull. Then she heeled over again, as she came about, and went off on the other tack.

They were saved from destruction, but by a hand's breadth only.

Billy and Dan were cast into the bottom of the boat by the tossing of their craft, and one wave washed over them, wetting them thoroughly. But Dan sprang for his oars then, put her head toward the rollers caused by the departing vessel, and so escaped swamping. Billy bailed out the water.

Suddenly he let out another yell, and Dan shot a glance over his shoulder.

"What is it?" he cried. "Another one?"

"Look! Look!" cried the younger lad. "Hurrah! She's busted!"

Just what had "busted" Dan did not know for a moment. Then he realized that the fog cloud overhead had grown suddenly thinner. The sun was coming through the haze. It was lighting up all around them. The mist was evaporating fast.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Dan. "That vessel must have torn the fog apart for fair! She surely is clearing, Billy."

Billy hurried to hoist the sail of the yawl. So rapidly was the fog dissipated that within five minutes they could descry the distant coast, while

the eminence of Wild Man's Island loomed up just at hand—in an entirely different direction, Billy was forced to admit, than he expected it to be.

“You see what would have happened had we sailed on in the fog,” Dan remarked. “Now, we can lay a course with some degree of certainty, for the spot where we last saw the *Red Arrow*.”

They could not behold the drifting launch as yet—not even when the last shred of fog was whisked away and the brilliant winter sun played over the heaving ocean as far as they could see. There was no distant speck that they could be sure was the *Red Arrow*.

“Suppose she was run down by the out-going ship instead of us?” murmured Billy. “Wouldn't that be awful?”

But the wind pushed them along at a fair speed again, and, within an hour, Dan made out a floating object far ahead that he was sure was the launch. There were other vessels in sight now, but none seemed to have paid any attention to the drifting boat.

They put the yawl on a course which was as direct as it was possible to sail her, for the launch, and after some time drew near enough to be sure that the *Red Arrow* had not, as yet, been injured and that nobody was aboard of her.

She acted erratically, and before the boys

reached her in the yawl a coastwise steamer drew near. But the Speedwells reached her first and the steamer, with a shriek of her whistle, swept on, and left the two boys with their prize.

She was all right! Her hull, even, did not seem to have been marred. She had shipped no water and everything about her was as right as right could be!

Dan was soon busy about the engine, while Billy took the wheel. The "put, put, put!" of the exhaust began to echo across the tumbling waves. The bow of the launch was turned toward Wild Man's Island, the yawl being towed.

It was growing dark before they made out the outline of the rocky shore of the isle. And bearing swiftly down upon them appeared the *Crow Flight*, with John Bromley himself in charge. The fishing party had been caught by the fog, too, and had only recently gotten in, and learned of the loss of the *Red Arrow*, and the attempt the Speedwells had made to recover her.

The story of the cutting of the mooring line was known to the party aboard the *Crow Flight*. Chance Avery was among them, but there were none of the girls present.

"Who do you suppose cut the hawser, Dan?" demanded Larry Stetson from his deck. "Was it a joke?"

"The joker who did it tried to burn the *Red*

*Arrow* the night before the regatta. John Bromley knows about it," said Dan, sharply.

"And this is the second time somebody has tried to injure the launch?" cried Larry.

"Yes. We suspected the person then; we know him now," declared Dan.

"You mean that one of our party is guilty?" said Larry, seriously.

"Who else could have done it?" demanded Dan.

"And who but a fellow who has always hated us, and always tried to do us harm, would cut such a mean caper?" shouted Billy.

"I reckon we all know who he means," said Wiley Moyle, who had come out to meet the Speedwells in the *Crow Flight*.

"I don't understand you," said Larry, gravely. This was his party, he had invited all those present, and he felt himself responsible for the good behaviour of all. "This is a serious charge, Speedwell. Won't you speak plainly?"

"His face is speaking plainly enough for him right now!" shouted Billy, and he pointed his accusing finger at the red and angry features of Chance Avery, who stood directly beside the chair of the crippled youth.

All present turned their gaze upon Chance.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FOOTPRINT IN THE SAND

LARRY STETSON was the last to realize that the accusation fell upon the youth he had chosen to be sailing master of the launch. He seemed, at first, too surprised to speak. Then, he shouted across the narrow bit of water to the *Red Arrow*.

"Do you mean old Chanceford here? You *don't* mean to say that you believe he cut the rope, and set your launch adrift?"

But Dan interfered before his impetuous brother could reply.

"We'll discuss the matter when we get back to the island, Stetson. We have reason to believe that Avery dislikes us enough to be glad if the boat had been lost. We know that he has tried to injure us before. Therefore we have good reason for our suspicions now."

"Suspicions!" ejaculated Wiley Moyle, who stood right beside the accused Avery. "I should call it certainty."

Chance Avery wheeled on him with fists clenched, and would have struck the younger and

smaller boy; but Larry stopped him. Larry was man enough when an emergency like this arose, to command the attention of his guests.

"Don't do that, Avery!" he said. "These fellows have no business to heckle you, but I'll have no fighting here. The accusation the Speedwells make is unfounded, of course, save in the fact that you have shown your dislike of them. Naturally they look upon you as an enemy."

"I don't propose to have the muckers consider me a friend," growled Chance.

"I am sorry for that," rejoined Larry Stetson, sadly, "for both you and they are my friends."

"That's so, Larry," broke in Monroe Stevens. "This is your party, and these fellows are spoiling it with their quarreling. Now, you fellows better let the matter drop. We'll find out to-night, after supper, who's guilty, or who isn't."

Dan and Billy were still near enough to the other launch to hear this. Billy was angry, but Dan said:

"We come pretty near deserving what Monroe says. Just because Chance is a blackguard does not excuse our being ruffianly."

"Of course not!" cried Billy. "And we're to let Chance Avery wreck Mr. Craig's boat without saying anything about it; eh?"

"We'd better not say anything until we can say it with the proper effect."

"What do you mean?"

"How are we going to prove that Avery did it?"

"Well——"

Billy hesitated and stopped. He stared at his brother and shook his head.

"We ought to examine the shore about the place where we tied the boat."

"Mostly rocks. And what soil there is is hard as a brick pavement. Besides, there're fifteen other boys' shoes here of about Avery's size. Footprints won't prove anything."

But the Speedwell boys were destined to be confronted by certain footprints, and they came upon them almost as soon as they had landed. This time they anchored the launch out in the cove and went ashore in Larry's tender. They had arrived at the island anchorage ahead of the *Crow Flight*, and all the girls and the other boys cheered their appearance, and that of the lost power boat.

As soon as Dan and Billy could get away from the enthusiastic crowd of their friends, they went along the shore to the spot where the *Red Arrow* had been moored. It was pretty nearly dark, but they could see the surroundings clearly enough. It was the rougher part of the island, the rocky hill in which the waves were situated, rising from this side of the cove.

"You see," Dan said to Billy, "we could find no footprints right here."

"Say! there's a piece of firm sand yonder—and above high water mark. Let's look at it."

Billy ran down to the spot. It was within stone's throw of the tree to which the *Red Arrow* had been moored. Suddenly he shouted for Dan to come to him and his brother did so.

Billy was stooping over a broad mark in the sand. Beyond was another. They were the almost perfect prints of the bare right and left foot of a human being—a very broad, short foot, much too large to be comfortably encased in Chance Avery's shoes, or in the foot-gear of anybody else in the picnic party. Even Old John Bromley could not boast of such "understandings" as these.

"And," gasped Dan, "barefooted in January!"

"The wild man!" ejaculated Billy, standing up and looking around with no little fear.

There were plenty of hiding places in the rocks. The strange being who had made those prints in the sand might now be watching the Speedwell boys.

"It can't be the man who lived here so long ago. In spite of Old John's story coming down on the launch, I am sure the wild man is long since dead."

"I don't know how you can be sure of that," murmured Billy. "At least, there's somebody besides our party on the island. None of us ever made those footprints."

"And they *are* the marks of a man's feet," murmured Dan.

"I should say they were! Say! let's get back to the crowd. The man, whoever he is—wild or tame—must be a pretty tough customer."

"That is so," admitted his older brother, slowly. "And there's another thing too."

"What's that?" asked Billy.

"Perhaps he knows all about how the *Red Arrow* came adrift."

"And not Chance Avery!"

"We may have been barking up the wrong tree," said Dan.

"I don't believe it!" snapped Billy.

"Let's be fair," urged his brother. "Until now we were sure that some member of our party cut the launch adrift. Now we cannot be real sure."

"But what are we going to tell the fellows?"

"The truth, of course. We shouldn't have yelled out as we did at Chance. It serves us right," said Dan.

As the Speedwells stood there debating the matter, Old John came along the shore, bent on digging a few clams for a chowder the next day.

They showed him the prints of the broad-footed man.

"What do you make of it?" asked Dan.

"Make of it?" repeated Bromley. "Why, what *can* you make of it? It's jest a foot!"

"But whose foot?"

"That's what gets me! Ain't none of us. Must be a feller we don't know."

"The wild man?" suggested Billy.

"I swan I thought that old fellow was dead and gone years ago," said Bromley, seriously, wagging his head.

"It can't be he!" exclaimed Dan.

"I dunno. We'd better say nothing about it to the others. Scare the young ladies, ye know," said Bromley. "And we'll stand watches to-night."

"But don't you see," said Dan, "this may be the person who cut our cable."

"Not much!"

"Now, Mr. Bromley," said Dan, "we have already accused Chance Avery——"

"And he's guilty!" declared the fisherman, vigorously.

Billy caught at this: "You know it, then, John!" he cried.

"And so does Mr. Larry. Chance confessed it. He got mad with that Moyle boy and let out that he wished your launch had gone on the rocks

—and that's what he expected would happen when he cut the line. Yes, sir! Mr. Larry's greatly cut up over it. He told Moyle to say nothing about it until he'd seen you. Now let me get my clams. It'll be so dark soon that I couldn't tell a quahog from a maninose."

Dan had started off along the beach before Old John ceased speaking.

"Where you going?" demanded Billy, following him.

"I'm going to have a settlement with Chance Avery?" declared the older Speedwell, sternly.

"Are you going to fight him?" cried Billy.

"It he'll stand up to me," said Dan, more quietly. "I shall do my best to give him the thrashing that he so richly deserves."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MYSTERY OF THE ISLAND

DAN SPEEDWELL was not of a quarrelsome nature. Probably he had never come to blows with half a dozen boys in his life. But he knew how to use his fists if occasion required, he was remarkably strong for his age and size, and he certainly was not afraid of Chance Avery, although the latter was three years his senior and was both taller and heavier.

Billy had never seen his brother deliberately pick a quarrel with any fellow. But Dan was certainly in earnest now.

When they met some of their chums at the landing, waiting for the supper that Mrs. Reeve and the girls were preparing, Dan asked briefly where Avery was.

"He hasn't come ashore. And Larry wants to see you," said Jim Stetson.

"Where's Larry?"

"On the *Crow Flight*, too."

The yawl lay drawn up on the sand. The launches had been warped out from the beach and anchored. Dan, aided by Billy, shoved off the small boat. Jim and Wiley Moyle came over to them. They had observed Dan's expression and knew that "something was doing."

"I did say I'd never go aboard the *Crow Flight* when that Avery was on her," muttered Jim Stetson. "But I slept there last night, and I reckon I can stand it once more—for the sake of seeing his finish."

He and Wiley stepped in after the Speedwells, and the four boys were soon climbing over the rail of the cabined launch. Larry and Chance were below, and the cabin lamp was lit.

"Here's Speedwell now," exclaimed Evan Stetson's son, and his voice sounded relieved.

He was sitting at the table. Chance Avery was standing by the cushioned seat that ran along the side of the cabin, and his handbag was packed.

"I am looking for that fellow, Stetson," said Dan, sharply, pointing at Avery. "It's about time he and I had a settlement. And with your permission we'll have it out right up on deck here."

"I'm not going to fight you, Speedwell," snarled Avery. "I could beat you easily enough——"

"And I'm here to let you try it," said Dan,

starting toward him belligerently. But Larry Stetson stopped him.

"Don't do that, Dan! I forbid it. I won't have two of my guests fighting. What will the girls say, too? I am sorry that I invited Chance Avery to come with us, or that I ever had anything to do with him. And he is going away to-night."

"Aw, say!" grunted his cousin Jim. "Let him get what's coming to him. I can see that Dan's been saving it up a long time. Don't let it spoil."

"There shall be no fighting here," declared the crippled lad, earnestly. "Now mind; you are all my guests, and I feel responsible for your actions—to a degree. What you do, Speedwell, to Avery, after you both get home, is no business of mine."

"But how's Chance going to get back to Riverdale to-night?" asked Wiley Moyle.

"He is going to Barnegat. He can get the train from there. I am going to ask Monroe to take him on the *Hashimura*, or—will you take him to Barnegat, Speedwell?"

"In a minute!" ejaculated Billy, under his breath; but Dan said:

"Yes. We will take him—and glad to see him go."

"But he is my guest until he is landed at

Barnegat," said Larry, warningly. "I don't want you to forget that."

"Let him keep a civil tongue between his teeth, and he will not be touched," declared Dan.

"When can you be ready?" asked the crippled youth.

"In ten minutes," returned Dan, promptly. "We'll take him over now."

"And remember, you fellows—Jim, especially I want to warn," said Larry Stetson, sharply, "this business is to be kept from the girls—and the rest of the folks. I've warned Bromley. Now, you take him along Dan, and thank you."

The cripple turned his back on Avery as that individual picked up his bag and followed Dan and Billy, without a word, to the deck. He got into the yawl with the other boys and was rowed to the side of the launch that he had done his best to wreck.

The Speedwells and Avery got aboard and the other two went ashore with Larry. Dan and Billy would miss supper, for it was a thirty-mile run to Barnegat and they could not make the round trip in much less than four hours. But they immediately made the *Red Arrow* ready to start, and almost before Larry Stetson and his cousin, and Wiley, were ashore on the island, the exhaust of the *Red Arrow's* engine announced her departure from Wild Man's Island.

The Speedwell brothers said nothing to Avery, nor did that young man speak to either Dan or Billy during the entire run to Barnegat. The evening was fair, if cold, and the ocean was smoother than it had been all day. They made the trip in good time and without accident; but when the *Red Arrow* ran alongside the dock, and Avery was about to disembark, he said to Dan:

"You said something about wanting to beat me up, Speedwell. You'll never be man enough to do that, and don't you forget it!"

Dan made no reply, but Billy flared up at once.

"I believe I could thrash you myself, Avery," he exclaimed.

"Why, you little whippersnapper!" said Avery, from the stringpiece of the wharf. "I could fix you with one hand!"

"I bet you could—if I wasn't looking," said Billy.

"Let him go," Dan remarked.

"Come up here and I'll show you what I can do to you," cried Chance, shaking his fist at Dan.

"Just be of that same opinion at some future time, will you?" returned Dan Speedwell, coolly. "I am not going to fight you to-night."

Avery spluttered away, but Dan said no other word, nor would he let Billy answer back.

"We've got rid of him—that's sufficient," Dan

said. "Somebody besides ourselves knows just how mean he is. I can see now that Chance Avery will lose his popularity from this time on."

They started the *Red Arrow* again and shot out from the dock and across the bay to the breakwater in record time. There was a small moon and the stars, too, were brilliant. It was a frosty sight, but there was little wind and the boys could not have asked for a better evening for the trip.

Suddenly, as they sailed so swiftly, Billy who was at the wheel, called to his brother:

"Hi, Dan! I've picked up a light."

"Where away?" inquired his brother.

"It's betwixt us and the island—I think."

"Must be another boat."

"Can't be. There's some swell and this light is as steady as though it were in a house."

"It is on the island, then."

"But, Dan, that can't be possible," said Billy. "You know that this side of the island is almost inaccessible from the shore of the cove where the boys are."

"You're right, Billy!" exclaimed his brother, displaying more interest now. "Let's see——"

He sprang up to his brother's side and quickly observed the steady spark that had attracted Billy's attention.

"What do you make out of it?"

"I don't know!" declared Dan. "That light

must be on the rocks. And it can't be any of our fellows——”

“Of course not.”

“Then who—Billy, is it possible that there is somebody there in the old caves?”

“Those footprints we saw were no fairy steps,” said Billy. “There's somebody or other on the island in hiding.”

“Hold on!” exclaimed Dan. “Don't bear off, keep on for the light.”

“We'll go smack into the rocks.”

“No we won't. We'll run as near as we can and perhaps we may see what the light means.”

“All right,” returned his brother, eagerly. “Maybe Old John's story of the wild man is true after all. He said he had big feet— and went bare-footed.”

“And likewise that he had been dead ten years,” said Dan, drily.

“He was some staggered himself this afternoon, just the same, when we showed him the footprints,” retorted Billy.

The *Red Arrow* was still traveling at some fifteen knots an hour toward the island. Dan went back to the cock-pit, but did not as yet reduce their speed. The island looked very black indeed on this side, saving where that brilliant spark burned, close down to the water.

They saw the shore at the foot of the rocky

promontory. It was narrow and was shut off completely from the other side of the island by the rugged reef that thrust itself into the sea. Had Wild Man's Island not been so far off the track of vessels, the government must have put a light there, for it was indeed a dangerous spot.

The *Red Arrow* darted in to the land, and was almost as near as Dan dared to run, and he had shut off speed, when the spark of fire ashore was quenched.

"She's out!" cried Billy.

"Somebody's shut the door," grunted Dan.

"I guess that's right."

"There's no house here."

"Well, there's something. I don't want to bump the *Red Arrow's* nose against these rocks. I wish we could have gotten in nearer before the light was shut off."

"It must be in one of the caves," said Billy.

"Quite true."

"Then there *is* somebody hiding on the island."

"It looks like it," returned Dan, quietly.

"Ease off, Billy. We'll run around to the cove."

"Will you tell about this, Dan?" asked his brother.

"We'll speak to John. Guess we'd better not tell the fellows. And the girls would be scared to death if they knew the wild man had come back," and Dan chuckled.

They got safely back to their moorings in half an hour, and were welcomed vociferously by the boys on the *Crow Flight*. The girls had already retired; but Old John was not abed, and Dan got him aside and told him of the light which had been seen on the other side of the island.

"Keep it dark," advised the fisherman. "I've told Mr. Stetson I'd keep awake part of the night—and I shall. You boys can take turns watching toward morning. I don't apprehend any trouble, even if the feller has big feet," concluded Old John, chuckling.

That night Dan and Billy slept aboard their own launch; Monroe Stevens and Wiley Moyle went to the *Hashimura*, although Monroe was not apprehensive, knowing nothing about the mystery of the island. Old John paced the shore half the night, and then awoke Dan and he took the watch until four, being relieved by Billy. But not one of the three heard, or saw, anything to suggest that there was anybody on the island but themselves.

"Just the same," declared Billy Speedwell, "those footprints and that light on the shore were not hallucinations. Whether it is the wild man, or not, it is surely somebody."

The party remained undisturbed, however. That third day they had a fine time, but left in the launches for Riverdale before mid-afternoon.

This was Saturday, and school would open again the next week. But at least this party of Riverdale young folks had enjoyed their New Year's vacation.

There would follow ten weeks of hard school work before the Easter recess, and during that time there was much inclement weather, there was not so much time for fun on the river, or on the roads with automobile or motorcycle. The Speedwell boys were very busy with the rest, and Mr. Craig's launch remained, for the most of the time, under its canvas cover and in John Bromley's charge.

The boys did not hear from Mr. Craig. Billy was firm in his belief that the kind-hearted owner of the *Red Arrow* was the man they had rescued from the river, and whom they had seen marched on board the warden's launch as an escaped prisoner. Billy said that that mystery was as puzzling as the one of the unknown Crusoe on Wild Man's Island.

When the Easter holidays opened, the Kent and Parker families left for the port from which the *Orville* would sail for her cruise to the Bermudas. Dan and Billy were among those at the station to see them off, and wished Mildred Kent and Lettie Parker a delightful vacation. The party left on the two o'clock train on Friday. That evening the steamship sailed, and

when the Speedwell boys finished their chores, and prepared to go into the house for the night it was blowing heavily and was raining.

"Mildred and Lettie are going to have a bad night of it," said Dan.

"I believe you. I guess Lettie'll be as sick as she can be," chuckled Billy. "And after making fun of me, too."

"But the steamer will quickly travel out of the belt of this storm, I hope," rejoined his brother.

At bed time, however, the gale had increased to a hurricane, and the boys went to sleep with the music of a hard rain storm beating on the roof.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE WIRELESS MESSAGE

BILLY was deep in dreamland in the double-bedded room he and Dan occupied in the Speedwell farmhouse, when he was annoyed very much by somebody shaking him and whispering in his ear. Billy was usually hard to awaken, and an alarm clock was nothing more to him than the buzzing of a bumble bee.

"Wake up, Billy!" he finally discovered that Dan was saying to him. "Wake up! How can you sleep when such a storm is raging?"

The younger brother was aware, then, that the house was quivering from the shock of the wind, that gusts of rain were slamming every few seconds against the pane, and that it was as black out of doors as the inside of a coal mine.

Dan had lit his candle, however, and was busily dressing before Billy realized these facts.

"What's the matter with you?" yawned the younger boy. "We only just got to bed, didn't we?"

"It's past two, and we'll be made late this

morning by the storm. Come, get up, lazy-bones! "

" Oh, dear me! " grunted Billy. " What's the use of being a slave? "

He crawled out, yawned, and began following Dan's example in the matter of dressing expeditiously. This was not one of the mornings that lively Billy enjoyed creeping out.

" Come on—softly now! " commanded Dan, picking up the candle-stick.

But they could not get down stairs quietly enough for their mother not to hear them. She came to her door and whispered:

" Be sure and wrap up warmly, boys. It is cold as well as wet out. Take care of your throat, Daniel. Put on your new boots, Billy—not the old leaky ones."

" Bless her heart! " said Dan, as they reached the kitchen. " I believe she never sleeps with both eyes shut! Now stir up the fire, old boy, and make a hot drink for us. Look at that pan of doughnuts—my! Don't eat them all before I come back."

He laughed as he opened the outer door and ploughed into the rain and wind. But he found it no laughing matter to get as far as the barn. He was almost beaten flat on one occasion, and the water was running through the yard in a stream, ankle deep.

"This is a regular hurricane," muttered Dan. "It must be awful at sea——"

And it wasn't until he had thought of this that he remembered Mildred Kent and Lettie Parker, with their families, on the southern-bound steamship.

"I wonder if they put out of port last evening?" muttered Dan. "If they are out in this gale the girls will sure be frightened."

It was past eight o'clock when the Speedwell boys and their auto truck came through Race Street towards the Court House Square, and passed the office of the *Riverdale Star*. Jim Blizzard, the editor of that newsy sheet, and a good friend of the Speedwells, was coming hurriedly out of the office and he hailed the boys.

"Take me up town, will you boys? I'm in a hurry," he said. "I must make the eight-forty-five train to Port Luther."

"Climb in," said Dan. "You're welcome."

"What's sprung a-leak, Mr. Blizzard?" asked Billy. "Something must be going on at Port Luther."

"There's something going on, I guess, all along the coast," said the editor, seriously.

"This storm, eh?" queried Dan.

"The reports are bad. Wreckage already strews the beaches. Many vessels had to put back last night."

"I hope the *Orville* did not put out," said Dan, gravely.

"You mean the steamer for the Bermudas?"

"Yes, sir. The one the Parkers and Kents were sailing on," said Billy.

"My goodness, boys!" gasped the editor. "That slipped my mind. I knew the Parkers and Kents were going on her, too."

"Oh, well," said Billy, "there's plenty of time to get it in to-day's paper—or do you want to issue a special edition?"

"You don't understand, Billy," said the gentleman. "The *Orville* did put to sea last evening.

"Then poor Lettie is getting all she wants of the billowy ocean," cried Billy.

"More than that," pursued Mr. Blizzard, "I just heard from the wireless station at Ricketts Point, beyond Port Luther. A steamer has gone down right off the coast. They think it is the *Orville*."

Dan almost ran the car into a telegraph pole, and Billy uttered a cry of fright.

"No, no! You don't mean that," said Dan.

"That is what the wireless operator at Ricketts made out. He caught part of a message from the operator on the *Orville*. The steamer had sprung a leak and was sinking then."

"Just think of it! Poor Mildred!" muttered the white-faced Dan.

"It can't be possible!" declared his brother.

"I fear it is only too true," said Mr. Blizzard.

"But I did not remember at the time that some of our well-known towns folk were aboard the steamer."

Dan began to recover himself, and asked quietly:

"Where is she supposed to have gone down, Mr. Blizzard?"

"Off Wild Man's Island. The operator aboard said that two boats, with several of the women and children, had already been launched and were making for the island."

"And that was all the message?"

"Yes. It was cut off suddenly. My friend at Ricketts thinks the boat must have sunk while his brother operator was at work."

"But two boats, then, were making for the shore," said Dan, thoughtfully.

"A terrible barren and rocky coast. They were doubtless either swamped or dashed to pieces on the reef," said the editor.

"I don't know about the swamping part," said Dan; "but—when was this message received?"

"By me? An hour ago."

"No. By the wireless operator."

"Why, he heard of the wreck at six-fifteen o'clock."

Dan had pulled out a little pocket-diary that

on each daily page had printed the moon's changes and the tides. In a minute he said:

"The tide was running in at that hour. There is a swift current to the inlet of Wild Man's Island. If the boats came anywhere within reach of that cove, they would be sucked into it—and there is a quiet anchorage."

"But there's only a bare chance that the boats could reach the island at all," said the newspaper man.

"I wonder if Lettie and Mildred were in either of those boats?" murmured Billy, who felt the disaster deeply.

"Was there no help going to the place, Mr. Blizzard?" asked Dan.

"The nearest life saving station is at Port Luther. I am going down to see what has been done, and to get later news if possible."

"Why doesn't somebody get a boat at Barnegat and run out to the island?" cried Billy.

"There are plenty of boats at the breakwater, I suppose," said the newspaper editor. "If one could get word to them——"

Both boys spoke in a breath and both were of the one mind.

"The *Red Arrow*!" they uttered, together.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Blizzard, curiously.

"We could run as far as the breakwater, if we didn't get outside," said Dan, reflectively.

"Your launch, eh?" said Mr. Blizzard.

"Mr. Craig's power launch," said Dan. "But we can use it."

"Are you boys thinking of running down there?" asked Mr. Blizzard, with some eagerness. "It would be a splendid way of getting near the scene of the catastrophe. I'd dearly love to go along with you."

Dan and Billy looked at each other and were instantly agreed.

"You meet us at Bromley's wharf in an hour, Mr. Blizzard, and you shall go with us," said Dan, quickly. "It will not take us longer than that to go home and make the start."

The editor agreed and the boys left him at his home and sped away in their auto for the farm.

## CHAPTER XX

### TO THE RESCUE

THE fact that their friends, Mildred and Lettie, as well as the other members of the Parker and Kent families, were aboard the wrecked *Orville*, and that the steamer was supposed to have sunk off Wild Man's Island, not thirty miles southeast of Barnegat, was communicated by the Speedwell boys to their parents in a very few words.

That they wanted to go as near to the island as it was safe, in the launch, did not astonish Mr. and Mrs. Speedwell; nor did they oppose the boys' desire. Their mother hastened to put provisions and medicines, and the like, in a huge market basket, and Mr. Speedwell said he would drive the boys down to Bromley's wharf when they were ready to depart.

In less than an hour from the time they had left the editor, the Speedwell lads were oiling up the *Red Arrow's* engine and Old John was aiding them in getting the launch ready for work. Mr. Blizzard drove down in a hired carriage and they

were soon off, the *Red Arrow* headed down the river.

"There is great excitement in the town," said Mr. Blizzard. "I had the wireless message put on the *Star's* bulletin board, and the news is all over by now."

But the value of the catastrophe as a news story did not much interest Dan and Billy. They were worried as to the possible escape, or loss, of the two young girls in which they had so much reason to be interested.

Mr. Blizzard was inclined to be talkative, and the time passed swiftly as he chatted. He managed to interest Dan and Billy in one subject, which he brought up, however—and a matter entirely foreign to this sudden voyage of the *Red Arrow*.

"So this is Mr. Craig's boat, is it?" he said. "Don't you ever hear from him?"

"No, sir," said Dan.

"And you do not know where he is, of course?"

Dan replied again in the negative, for Billy wouldn't! However, the younger Speedwell asked:

"Do you know what has become of him, Mr. Blizzard?"

"No. Not exactly," confessed the editor. "But I expect I know more about him than most

of the people of Riverdale; perhaps know him better than you boys do."

"We really do not know him at all," said Dan, slowly. "Although he has been mighty kind to us."

"Well, in the first place, his name is Asa Gedney Craig. He is one of the Gedneys of Port Luther—or, his mother was. He is a very fine man and a smart one. I believe that the world will hear of him some day as the inventor of a really wonderful submarine boat. He has been at work on it for years with his cousin, Fred Gedney."

"Fred Gedney!" gasped Billy, showing his interest.

"Ah! you have heard his unhappy story," said Mr. Blizzard.

"We know that there is a Fred Gedney in the Meadville prison," Dan hastened to inform the newspaper man.

"Yes. He is like his cousin, Mr. Craig, in a good many ways besides personal appearance. They do look extremely alike. And their minds have the same scientific slant," said Mr. Blizzard. "Poor Fred!"

"How did he get into trouble?" asked Billy, quickly.

"You don't know about it, then?"

"No, sir," replied the boys together.

"He is a chemist, as well as an inventor like Craig. They were both interested in this submarine boat that Craig is perfecting. But Fred Gedney had a laboratory for the manufacture of explosives, or some dangerous chemicals, in the city of Summerford, and in a big building where many people lived. It is supposed that it was quite by accident, and when Gedney was not in his workshop, that the fire started that burned down the building and cost the lives of several of the inmates.

"There was very bitter feeling against Gedney, although he stoutly denied having made explosives, or having used dangerous chemicals in combination, in that place. But the proof was all against him; the friends of the burned people gave very damaging testimony. They were bitter," said Mr. Blizzard. "And so, poor Fred went to prison. His friends are hoping he will be pardoned; but the feeling was so much against him that they have not dared petition the governor yet, and he has been imprisoned nearly three years."

"It seems too bad," murmured Dan.

"It is a very sad case. He has a young wife and child, too. Asa Craig spent every penny he could spare to try and save him, and he looks after Fred's family. They were great chums, Asa and Fred. Would do anything for each

other. Likable fellows, both," concluded Mr. Blizzard.

His story interested Dan and Billy, but, to tell the truth, they were so anxious regarding the fate of the *Orville* and her passengers that the boys gave this tale less attention now than they would have at some other time.

But Billy was still more convinced that Mr. Craig had changed places with his cousin, and was now serving Fred Gedney's sentence, while that individual was free. He whispered this to Dan, out of hearing of Mr. Blizzard, and his brother said:

"I never knew you, Billy, to stick to a foolish idea so stubbornly."

"And I never knew you to be so hard to convince of a plain fact! Even the letter he sent us to give to the boat club committee didn't show you that I was right."

"I will go as far as to admit that Mr. Craig must have been informed of our difficulty about the regetta."

"Yes? And who informed him, Dan?"

"Perhaps his cousin, who heard us tell the warden we could not race."

"And he said he'd fix it for us!" scoffed Billy. "I heard him with my own ears, I know I did!"

"Well, he did fix it, didn't he? He may have

seen his cousin at the prison after he was recaptured, and told Mr. Craig of our difficulty."

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed Billy, vigorously; and there they dropped the matter for the time.

The peril of their friends who had sailed in the *Orville* was too weighty a matter to give place for long to any other subject of thought. The *Red Arrow* was forced to a pretty good speed in running down the river; but the bay was even more tumultuous, and they were obliged to reduce the revolutions of her propeller.

They were two hours and a half getting to Barnegat. They spoke no other craft on the way, and the newspaper man wanted to stop at the port and learn if later news had been received of the loss of the *Orville*.

He left the Speedwell boys, and ran up town to the office of the Barnegat *Inquirer*, where he knew his brother news-gatherers would have received the latest intelligence of the disaster. He was gone some time and, meanwhile, Dan and Billy heard much talk on the dock regarding the wreck of the steamer. By this time the news had been telegraphed all over the state, and of course the 'longshoremen and sailors were much interested in it.

Mr. Blizzard soon came back with some information. News had been received, *via* wireless,

from the New York bound steamer, *Elesmere*. She had succeeded in reaching the foundering *Orville* before the latter steamer sank, and had taken off both passengers and crew. That is, she had taken off all those remaining aboard.

But, as Mr. Blizzard had first heard, two boatloads had gotten away from the *Orville* before the rescue craft appeared. Whether those unfortunate people were lost, or had reached Wild Man's Island, there was as yet no means of knowing.

Mr. Blizzard brought the passenger list with him. The names of all missing had been sent by the wireless operator of the *Elesmere*, and among them were those of all the Parker family, and of Mildred Kent!

Dan and Billy were affected almost to tears. The chance that the unfortunates had escaped to land was so slight that they well-nigh gave up hope.

"There is a possibility, you know," said Mr. Blizzard, with gravity, "that they may be safe ashore on Wild Man's Island. But until this storm ceases we probably shall not know."

"And must we wait all that time?" cried Billy, in despair.

"You know yourself, boy, that no vessel could safely approach the narrow entrance to that cove—and it is the only landing place," spoke the editor.

But Dan was thinking. He said, quickly:

"We don't know that, sir."

"Don't know what, Dan?" asked the journalist.

"That a boat cannot land save by going around to the seaward side of the island."

"Why, this side of the island shore is sheer rocks for almost its entire length."

"But the waters will be comparatively quiet on that side."

"Ridiculous! If you made a landing, how would you climb those slippery rocks?"

"Maybe we wouldn't have to climb them," said Dan.

"What would you do, then—fly?" scoffed Mr. Blizzard.

"The caves open up on this side of the island," said Dan.

Billy was instantly alive to the idea his brother was turning over in his mind.

"And those caves have outlets on the other side of the island, I've heard," he cried.

"They do indeed. John Bromley has been through them."

"The boys wanted to explore them while we were out there New Year's week," said Billy. "But we had to discourage them—you know why," he added, with meaning.

"Why?" asked the newspaper man.

"Because of the wild man," said Billy.

"Pshaw! he's been dead this long while," declared Mr. Blizzard.

"Then there's a new wild man taken possession," said Dan, quietly. "There was a strange man on the island at that time. We saw his footprints and a fire that he lit."

"And that fire," said Billy, eagerly, "was right in the mouth of one of the caves on this side of the island. We saw it from the sea, Mr. Blizzard."

"If we could run the *Red Arrow* close in to that shelf where he had his fire, we could get ashore, find our way through the water-made passages to the other side, and if the folks are there——"

"It's hardly possible!" rejoined Mr. Blizzard.

But he did not say he thought Dan's project was impossible, or the fact that the castaways had reached the island was beyond reasonable expectation. However, the Speedwells began to pluck up courage. They would not lose all hope.

"We've got to do something!" ejaculated Billy, vigorously.

"We shall have to wait for the gale to cease," Mr. Blizzard said.

"I couldn't remain idle all that time," Dan replied, earnestly.

"Me, neither!" from Billy.

"But what will you do?"

"Try and make a landing on the island."

"Foolhardy!" exclaimed the gentleman, shaking his head.

"We're going to try it, anyway," said Billy, backing up his brother. "Just think! Lettie is there——"

"And Mildred," said Dan.

"And Lettie's folks."

"There are nearly forty unfortunate either drowned, or somewhere on the island," admitted Mr. Blizzard, gravely. "But we must not add to the number."

"I am sure I can get the *Red Arrow* in near the island. The water will be quiet on this side."

This from Dan. He spoke so earnestly that he impressed Mr. Blizzard, and that gentleman said:

"I tell you, boys, what we can do. Let us go out to the breakwater. There are several tugs there waiting for a chance to run out to help any sailing vessel that may make for this port. Perhaps we can wire one of those tugs to try to get to the island."

"All right. We're off, then," said Dan, briefly, and he ran to the engine at once, while Billy took the wheel.

It was plain, as they crossed diagonally the mouth of the bay to the sheltered spot behind the

breakwater, that the little *Red Arrow* rode the seas much better than many of the heavier craft they passed. She was as sea-worthy as a cork and, when they ran her slowly, did not ship much water.

At the breakwater they interviewed (under difficulties) the skippers of two craft. They had heard of the plight of the *Orville*; but neither captain believed that any rowboat had lived to get into the cove at Wild Man's Island. As for landing on the western shore of the isle—that was not to be thought of. Their tugs were too large.

"Try it yourself in that launch," roared one captain. "You've got a better chance to hit it than any kind of craft along here. That's the only way the life savers could get to the island—from this side. And they'd likely try it, too, if they had a gasoline boat."

"We're going to try it, Mr. Blizzard!" exclaimed Dan. "Do you want to see it through, or will you go aboard one of these tugs?"

"I'm game if you boys are," declared the newspaper man. "I think it is a reckless proceeding, but I couldn't go back to Riverdale and tell your father that I let you two boys attempt it alone."

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE LANDING

THE *Red Arrow* had already sheered off from the side of the last tug the Speedwells and Mr. Blizzard had spoken. Billy headed for the end of the breakwater, without waiting for further instructions.

The water was comparatively quiet behind the long ridge of masonry that had been built out on a rocky ledge to hold the Atlantic breakers back. The waves roared and pounded now on the far side of the wall. They could see the spray from the bursting breakers splashing over the summit of the wall.

At the end of the breakwater a lighthouse was set. Sometimes, in even heavier storms than this one now raging, the spindrift from the waves showered the lantern at the top of the lighthouse pillar.

Fortunately the rain had ceased and the voyagers had a clear prospect before them. They could see over the wind-whipped sea as far as on a pleasant day.

The *Red Arrow* was kept away from the light-house point, and made a long curve into the open sea. The billows rolled into the wide mouth of the bay with a most threatening aspect. The launch seemed diving to the very bottom of the sea when she coasted down a billow, and then the boys looked up the next hill of green, foam-streaked water and wondered in their secret hearts if they would ever climb safely to the summit.

The launch rode these great rollers splendidly, however; Dan kept the machinery running steadily, and the propeller seldom kicked out of the sea. Sometimes, however, as the boat shot over the summit of a great wave, the stern was in the air and Dan's quick hand had to reduce the revolutions of the engine. Otherwise its racing might have resulted seriously.

Dan trusted Billy with the wheel; and Mr. Blizzard had nothing to do but crouch down by Dan's side, sheltered as much as possible from the dashing spray.

"This is a bold thing to do, Speedwell," the editor said, at last. "I doubt if a dozen men along the shore front would have tackled the job in such a little craft as this launch."

"Then we can congratulate ourselves that we are doing a pretty brave thing," Dan returned, smiling at him. "I am not afraid at all at the

present time, for I know that the *Red Arrow* will ride these waves like a duck. Of course, if something should break then we would be in danger."

"Where the danger will come in is when we get to the island," spoke Mr. Blizzard.

"We don't know that yet," returned Dan, cheerfully.

"I am pretty sure of it. We'll never be able to make a landing."

"We'll see."

Dan would not lose hope. And Billy was of his same mind. Besides, the two boys would have risked a good deal to go to the rescue of their friends. They did not know, of course, that they should find Lettie and Mildred on Wild Man's Island. But they would not give up the hope until they had reached that rugged refuge.

Thirty miles they had to run into the south. When they first rounded the breakwater and began to climb the great rollers, and then coast down them into the deep troughs between, Wild Man's Island was scarcely visible. But the little launch was making eight or ten miles an hour, and at noon the higher parts of the island were quite distinct.

The bulk of the island they were approaching loomed bigger and bigger. They could see a few trees bending and writhing in the blasts that swept

over the sea. But not a sign of any human occupancy could they observe.

"Whether there are castaways there, or only the wild man," said Dan, grimly, "we would not be likely to see either from this direction."

"Don't you think they would try to reach some high point and signal for help?" asked the *Star* editor.

"In time, yes; but not as soon as this. Think of it! It was only between six and seven this morning that they cast off from the sinking steamer. If they made the cove at the island safely, and got ashore without accident, they would only be able to seek shelter in the cabin—or elsewhere—and wait for the wind to go down."

All eyes were turned earnestly upon the rocky isle as the launch drew near and nearer. It seemed abandoned. A more dreary and lonesome spectacle than Wild Man's Island could not be imagined.

But, as Billy pointed out, the island itself sheltered, like a breakwater, a considerable pool of water on this side of it. Against the reef that ran out from the northern extremity of the isle, the waves of the Atlantic beat and tore as though endeavoring to pound the rock to atoms. Great masses of spume were torn from these breakers by the wind and whirled, balloon-like, in the air.

The sea about this reef seemed fairly to boil!

The boys knew that all along the far coast of the island this state of things probably prevailed. It seemed improbable indeed that the boats that had put out from the sinking *Orville* had managed to make a landing in such a sea.

On the near side of Wild Man's Island, however, the breakers merely rose against the rocks, cast up some tongues of spray, and then receded, sucking the water out of the hollows and tiny inlets, and displaying the weed-strewn ledges, like the fangs in an old wolf's jaw.

"We'll smash her if we run in there," declared Mr. Blizzard.

"We're not going to smash her," returned Dan, positively. "We'll choose a place midway of the island and see if we can't run into one of those little inlets. If we can get a line ashore on either hand, then, she'll ride at such moorings safely enough—as long as the wind does not shift."

"But how are you going to get ashore to hitch your lines?" demanded the editor.

"We'll see when the time comes. Now, I can trust you to watch the things here, Mr. Blizzard? You understand the mechanism of the craft?"

"Oh, yes. I'll take your place."

"I am going to relieve Billy at the wheel. I'll shout my orders so that you can hear me—to stop, or go ahead, or reverse, or what-not."

"Go on, Dan. I'll attend to it," Mr. Blizzard assured him.

Dan went to the wheel and after some discussion with his brother, the latter got into the bow of the launch and coiled two strong lines. One he looped over his arm, leaving plenty of the slack on the deck, its end securely fastened. The *Red Arrow* was now drawing into the wave-beaten rocks.

The lift of the rollers was much less here; compared with what they had been through since leaving the breakwater, this place was really calm!

Dan had asked Mr. Blizzard to run her slowly and the *Arrow* was poking her nose along shore not much faster than a boat could have been rowed. Before her was a narrow cut in the ledges—a veritable natural dock. With the tide as it was now, the rock on either hand was not a foot above the *Red Arrow's* rail.

"Ready, Billy?" shouted Dan, at the wheel.

"Aye, aye!" replied the younger lad, poising himself in readiness for the dangerous attempt.

"Speed up, sir!" shouted Dan, this time to Mr. Blizzard.

On the instant, as it seemed, the little launch leaped ahead. Dan twisted the wheel and headed directly between the jaws of rock. A wave had just been sucked back out of the hollow and there was not three feet of water in the narrow basin;

but that was enough to float the little launch.

Besides, she came in with the next wave. Like a shot from a gun she tore into the dock. It looked as though she was bound to smash her bows into the rocky wall!

"Back water!" yelled Dan.

And at the same moment Billy leaped. He flew like a bird over the space between the launch and the ledge of rock. He landed squarely, and plunged at the boulder which he had already picked out as a good thing around which to lash the line.

He had the cable taut in half a minute, the launch was backing and the beat of her propeller kept her off the rocks. Billy ran around the head of the inlet and stood ready on the other side to catch the line. Dan sprang to the bow.

The coil of rope hurtled through the air and Billy caught it. There was another boulder at hand and soon the launch was held between two strong, taut cables, rising and falling with the surging of the tide, but safe from rubbing her sides against the rocks on either hand.

Then the engine was stopped, the boys adjusted the lines with care, and soon Dan and Mr. Blizzard were able to follow Billy ashore without getting any wetter than they already were. The landing on Wild Man's Island had been made in safety.

## CHAPTER XXII

### IN THE CAVE

"BUT I can't see that we're much better off now, boys, than we were out yonder on the launch," confessed Mr. Blizzard. "You see, it will be impossible for us to scale these rocks."

"We don't expect to scale them, I tell you," said Billy. "We've got to go through them."

"The caves! that's so," said the newspaper man. "But none of us know anything about the caves. At least, I do not."

"Nor do Billy and I," said Dan.

"Then, are we going to try and find a hole and grope our way into it and see if we can find an exit on the other side of the mountain? A rather foolish, not to say perilous, proceeding," said Mr. Blizzard. "We might get lost in a labyrinth of turnings. I do not know how tortuous these passages are."

"You know as much about them as we do," said Billy.

"Then, shall we hunt a hole and try it?"

"We'll gain nothing by doing things in so haphazard a fashion," Dan declared.

"You've some good plan, then, my boy?" asked the editor.

"I think so. You know Billy and I saw a fire burning along this shore one evening."

"You have spoken of it before."

"That fire was likely built in the mouth of one of the caves. It was sheltered, for the flame did not flare. Now, if we can find an opening along here where there are ashes of a fire, or marks of one, isn't it likely that we shall be at the mouth of a passage that goes clear through the mountain?"

"How do you figure *that*?"

"Why, we saw the prints of a bare foot on the sand at the other side of the island. The man who made the footprint must have lit the fire—and quenched it, too, when he heard our exhaust as we drew near. He was likely living in some cave here that had an outlet upon both shores of the island."

"Well thought out," confessed Mr. Blizzard. "We'll look for the signs of that—or some other—fire."

The Speedwells had a pretty good idea of where the light had been that night in January. It was some distance to the north of where they had now landed. So the trio went along the rocky ledges in that direction, sharply on the lookout for the cavities in the wall.

They found several. Most of them were mere hollows, from a few feet square to chambers as big as a church. But only two showed signs of running very far back into the mountainous island.

The floor of these were examined near the exits for traces of camp fires; but they found nothing of the kind. Billy had brought a ship's lantern and Dan carried an electric pocket light. They were not likely to be lost in the darkness of any of these caves, therefore.

At last a round hole in the wall, some distance above high water mark, was discovered. It was man-height and offered a smooth bore into the sandstone. They climbed to the shelf in front of this hole, Billy in the lead, and his lantern revealed the entrance to them.

At first glance they learned that a fire had been burning here—probably much later than January, too! There was a heap of ashes, some wood broken up with an axe and piled against the wall, and a smooth boulder that had evidently been brought in here for a seat.

"Now, whether there is a wild man on the island, or not," said Mr. Blizzard "a human being has certainly lived here for some time."

"We can't doubt it," Dan returned.

"Do you suppose he is here now?" suggested Billy, quickly.

"There's nothing here to tell us," the editor said.

The passage was not ten feet wide for a hundred yards; then it suddenly opened into a big, irregular apartment—so big and so high that the lantern light could not reveal its entire dimensions. Out of this vast hall, however, they saw that many passages led.

The compass was a great help here. They immediately crossed the big cave, and began trying passages that started in an easterly direction. The first two they tried ended in pockets—regular *cul de sacs* out of which they could not escape save by returning to the main cave.

As they came from the second of these short passages, having registered another failure, Mr. Blizzard suddenly caught Billy by the arm, and drew him back. Billy still held the lantern; the light of it for a moment danced upon a boulder in the big cave.

"Hide it! hide the light!" the gentleman whispered.

Billy instantly put the lamp under his coat. Every gleam of it was hidden, yet there seemed to be some light in the big cave—a flickering light that danced upon the boulders with which the floor of the huge apartment was strewn.

"There's somebody coming out of one of the other passages," whispered Mr. Blizzard.

The boys kept silent, but crept to the entrance of the hole they were in and peered out. The wavering light grew stronger. Then they heard some creature panting.

The passage in which the gleam was seemed to be that next to the one in which the trio were. The sounds came nearer. The man—if it was a man—was right at hand. The light he carried—seemingly a torch, for it flickered a good deal—illuminated some square yards of the big cave.

Still he did not appear. He seemed to have halted at the entrance to the passage he was in, just as the Speedwells and the newspaper man had halted where they were.

Dan and Billy were on their knees, Mr. Blizard standing over them. All three were peering cautiously out of the passage. Suddenly Dan grabbed Billy's hand and squeezed it hard. His brother was already aware of the fact that the stranger in the other cavity had moved so that his arm and shoulder were visible. He appeared to have his left side toward them and was turned to look back through the passage by which he had just approached.

The sleeve of the coat he wore was of rough, coarse cloth. For a moment it was only the sleeve the boys saw.

Then the wrist and hand of the man came into view. It was a broad, hairy hand; it was

browned by sun and wind; the boys watched it as though fascinated, and both of them really expected that which, in a moment, appeared!

The cave-dweller turned his hand and they saw the back of it. Flickering and dim as the light was, they saw the vivid scar of the horseshoe burned thereon. There was no mistaking the scar—Dan believed he had seen it once before; Billy believed he had seen it twice!

The next instant the hand disappeared, soft footfalls followed, and the light grew dimmer in the big cave. The unknown was departing by the same passage.

"After him!" whispered Mr. Blizzard, stepping out into the larger cave.

The Speedwell boys saw that he had not observed the scarred hand, and they said nothing to him about it.

"Who do you suppose it was?" whispered Dan, eyeing the gentleman curiously.

"It really is a wild man, perhaps," replied the editor, with a nervous laugh.

"There's somebody on the island, sure enough," muttered Dan.

"And he knows his way about," said Billy.

"It can't be anybody from that wreck, boys."

"That fellow was not from the wreck," Billy muttered, with emphasis.

Now, Dan believed that the man whose hand

they had seen was Mr. Craig, while Billy was sure it was the escaped prisoner, Fred Gedney. The former asked—and much to Mr. Blizzard's astonishment:

"Say, Mr. Blizzard, where do you suppose Mr. Craig is building his submarine boat?"

"What's that?" demanded the editor. "Whatever put that idea in your head just now?"

"I'm just curious," returned Dan, while Billy started at him as blankly as did the gentleman.

"Nobody knows but he and Fred, I reckon," said Mr. Blizzard, shaking his head. "Asa Craig is very secret about it. I shouldn't wonder if he was working on it now in some hiding place. That's why you boys don't hear from him."

"Oh," said Dan, but Billy merely grunted.

"Now, let's push on after that fellow—whoever he is," suggested the newspaper man. "He'll lead us out of this tangle, I don't doubt."

"Or lead us into a worse one," muttered Billy.

Dan looked at his compass, nodded acquiescence, and they went on. The flickering light of the man with the horseshoe scar on his hand had disappeared. They pressed on into the crooked passage, and found no barrier or any further sign of the cave's occupancy, for some ten minutes.

Then they began to hear the booming of the

breakers. The sound grew louder as they advanced. .

"We're coming to the other shore," declared Dan. "This will bring us out into that rocky pasture beyond where Billy and I tied our launch ~~that~~ time Chance Avery cut it loose."

"But what's become of the wild man?" demanded his brother.

"We must look into that matter before we leave the island," said the editor, earnestly. "If there is a lone man living here we ought to see him and speak with him."

"I'm a whole lot more interested in the folks from the steamer—if they are here," said Dan, in return.

The next moment Billy uttered an exclamation. He stopped and turned down his light. They saw, then, that daylight was showing dimly in the passage ahead. They had come through the mountain and were on the eastern side of the storm-beaten island.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE TRAIL OF THE CASTAWAYS

THE trio pressed on to the open air. It seemed good to get into the daylight again, although the atmosphere of the caves had been fresh enough. The wind was still blowing a gale, and the white spume from the breakers was flung high in the air from the outer reef.

The cove was empty. As far as the Speedwell boys and their friend, Mr. Blizzard, could see, there was no craft floating upon the smooth pool of the cove, or drawn up on the beach. Mr. Blizzard said nothing, but his opinion was strengthened. They had come on a useless errand. The castaways were not here.

But Dan and Billy did not give up hope so easily. As soon as they had glanced around and located themselves, they set off in a hurry toward the smoother shore of the cove—the place where they and their younger friends had spent their holiday in January. The cabin, and the field surrounding it, were hidden by high rocks from the mouth of the cave.

Mr. Blizzard followed, perforce. He gave

several uneasy glances around, but saw nothing of the strange individual whom they had seen in the subterranean passage. Wild man or not, the editor wished very much to discover the mystery of this unknown.

In five minutes the boys came to the spot where they had, on that previous occasion, moored the *Red Arrow*. A few steps farther, and the remainder of the shore of the cove, and the spot where the cabin had stood, was revealed to them.

But there was no cabin there—not a sign of it saving blackened logs and a heap of ashes. The cabin had long since been burned to the ground!

“What do you know about that?” yelled Billy, running forward.

But half way to the cabin he halted and gave a cry, pointing to the shore of the cove. The others hurried forward. A big lifeboat, with a black stripe painted around her hull, lay on the beach. It was badly smashed. The places where the planks were broken showed that it was freshly battered. This present storm had been the wrecking of the boat.

There was no name upon her. There were no life preservers left in her. But when Dan came to the shore he found something in the bottom of the boat that brought a cry of dismay to his lips.

He held up a battered hat—a straw hat that had been trimmed with roses and ribbons and had a peculiar cut-steel ornament still fastened to it.

“Mildred’s!” he gasped. “That’s her hat. She was in this boat!”

“And the question is, did they reach the shore in it?” murmured Mr. Blizzard.

He glanced eagerly up and down the beach. Although it was littered with rubbish and drift stuff, there were no objects in sight that looked like the bodies of drowned people.

Billy was looking for footprints along the shore; but the tide had turned recently and the firm sand ended where the water left its highest mark. The loose soil and grass beyond did not betray a footprint.

“Here’s the boat,” said Dan Speedwell, slowly. “Where’s the folks that were in it?”

“And where is the other boat and her freight?” queried Mr. Blizzard, sadly.

“I know that Mildred Kent has been in this boat,” declared Dan. “That is her hat. There can be no mistake about it. And,” he added, having made an examination of the bow of the craft, “there are no water-tight compartments in the boat. If she had been overturned she would never have righted herself and drifted into this cove and come ashore.”

"Your reasoning carries some weight, Dan," admitted Mr. Blizzard.

"They're here somewhere," cried Billy, excitedly.

"But where?"

"As they could not find shelter in the cabin—since that was destroyed," said Dan, "where would they go?"

"To the caves," said Billy.

"The folks from Riverdale would know about the caves, of course," agreed Dan. "Mildred and Lettie would remember the talk we had about them when we were here before. They'd tell the others."

"And the tide has wiped the traces of 'em out, if they walked along the beach," added Billy, with a sigh.

"Then we must search the caves—eh?" asked Mr. Blizzard.

"Let's go back the way we came and holler for them," suggested Billy.

Even now they almost had to shout to make themselves heard, as the wind blew so fiercely and the breakers thundered so monstrosly on the outer reef. The trio of friends turned back and were soon among the great boulders that masked the base of the highest part of the island.

Seaward, all that they could see was a mass of white froth being tossed into the air as the

breakers smashed against the rocks. On the other hand, the cold, gray, barren boulders were all that was visible. Not a sign of life was to be seen.

They climbed among these rocks, looking for the openings in the hillside. It was easy to find the passage out of which they had just come themselves; but they knew there was nobody in that tunnel, unless the wild man had gone back there. There had been no cross passages in which any person could have hidden.

So the trio searched farther. Some sheltered spots they found, but they were not occupied. They shouted, but only the echo of their own voices were thrown back by the wind. It was a melancholly search indeed; the farther they got from the wreck of the lifeboat the more their spirits drooped.

Finally, after much fruitless searching, they rounded the cove itself and came to the line of rocks that defended the outer coast of the island. They were deafened by the roar of the breakers, and sometimes the bursting waves threw spume all over them, although they tried to keep high upon the hillside.

Amid the bursting waves they saw timbers and bits of planking—wreckage driven in from the open sea. Billy was sure that he saw the hull of another boat like that one in the cove, but it dis-

appeared in the cauldron of the sea before his companions could distinguish it.

"I wish we had brought Old John along," Dan shouted to the others. "He knows about these caves. He says he has been all through them many times."

The trio might have passed several tunnels in the hillside; but they did not know it if they did. Finally Mr. Blizzard found a good-sized cavity that looked as though—at some time—man must have gone to some pains in heaving up boulders in a wall and building a sort of platform before the opening. The cave itself seemed to extend back deeply in the hill.

"Light the lantern, Billy," advised Dan; but the wind blew so strongly, being sucked right into the tunnel, that Billy could not do this. His brother therefore, produced his hand lamp and led the way.

Some distance back from the opening there was a sharp turn in the tunnel, and the floor began to descend. In a small room here they found much driftwood piled up. Somebody had certainly occupied this tunnel in times past, whether they were at hand now, or not!

"The wild man, perhaps," said Mr. Blizzard.

Dan and Billy exchanged glances. Each thought he knew who the wild man was.

"Shall we go on?" asked the older Speedwell.

"We haven't seen a trace of any recent comers in here."

"Better look farther," Billy said. "I've got a hunch——"

What that hunch was he never explained. Dan's lamp only burned when he kept his forefinger pressed on the spring. He had let it die out and they stood in darkness. Suddenly a light flared up ahead of them. It was only for a second—just as though somebody had scratched a match and it had gone out.

"Hush!" breathed the newspaper man.

They waited, and listened. Not a sound. Finally Billy got nervous.

"Say!" he muttered. "This is slower than a Quaker meeting. Let's do something.

Dan switched on his light again. He shot the ray along the stone passage. Not far ahead was something lying on the floor.

Billy sprang forward, with a half-stifled cry. He grabbed up the object and held it out to the others.

"Do you see it? Do you see it?" he gasped. "A lady's purse. Surely no savage wild man of the caverns would be decorated with one of these things—what do you say?" and he began to dance in his glee.

Mr. Blizzard suddenly seized him by the shoulder and pulled him back. Into the radiance

of Dan's spot-light stepped a tall figure—bare-footed, bareheaded, with a countenance covered by a tangle of black beard and mustache—together an apparition to take one's breath away!

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE WILD MAN

AFTER the first startled moment, the eyes of Dan and Billy Speedwell darted to the left hand of the strange man. It was gloved.

Nor did this hairy, barefooted person look much like Mr. Craig. Dan did not feel sure that he could identify this person as the owner of the *Red Arrow*; nor did Billy wish to claim him as the escaped prisoner.

As for Mr. Blizzard, he was amazed beyond the power of speech, and for the moment was not likely to identify anybody.

Dan, in his surprise, or nervousness, took his finger off the switch of his lamp again and they were left in darkness. But the unknown seemed to see pretty well in the dark. He demanded in a harsh voice:

"What do you folks want here? What are you looking for? Come! out with it. What do you want?"

The manner in which this was said was more apprehensive than savage, and all three of the

interlopers began to feel braver immediately. Dan turned on the lamp, and Mr. Blizzard said:

"We might return that question, sir. What are *you* doing here? Who are you?"

"It doesn't matter who I am. I was here first. I've a right here," said the strange man, hurriedly.

"What are you doing here?" repeated Mr. Blizzard.

"That's none of your business. It doesn't concern you," declared the bewhiskered individual, in a shaking voice.

"And that isn't to the point," cried Dan, suddenly. "What we want to know is, how came this thing here?" and he held up the silver mesh purse that Billy had found. "This belongs to Mrs. Parker, of Riverdale. I've seen her carry it a hundred times. What do you know about it?"

The man started back at Dan's words, staring at the purse. "Then there *are* people here!" he muttered.

"We're here, sure enough," said Mr. Blizzard, hastily.

"But you and these boys just came to the island on my—on the *Red Arrow* launch," declared the strange man.

"You know that, then," said the newspaper editor. "Do you know what we came for?"

"No. You are disturbing me. I want you to go away," said the man, hanging his head.

"Man alive!" cried Billy, too impatient to wait longer, "didn't you see anything of the folks who got ashore from the *Orville*?"

"From the *Orville*?"

"Yes," said Dan. "From the steamer *Orville* that went to pieces, or sank, this morning, right off the island?"

"Did they indeed get ashore?" responded the stranger, curiously. "I saw the steamer in the distance, and heard her signals. I thought they put out boats. But the breakers were so heavy that I did not believe they got ashore."

He began to speak now with more intelligence. Mr. Blizzard was watching him narrowly, with a little puzzled frown.

"They must have gotten ashore," cried Billy. "One boat is in the cove—and here is this bag."

"I haven't seen them," said the man, shaking his head. "But if you found the bag in this passage——"

"I did," said Billy. "I picked it up here just after you lit that match."

"Just after I lit what match?" demanded the man, startled.

"We saw a match flash down this tunnel."

"No. I came from a side tunnel right yonder. I had no match. I left my torch back yonder."

You could not have seen it. I came in the dark."

"Then they're here!" cried Dan, joyfully.

"But where are they hidden?" demanded Billy, suspiciously. "What do you know about them?"

"I tell you I didn't know that anybody got ashore from the wreck," declared the hermit of the caves, for such this strange man seemed to be.

"You know these caves thoroughly, do you not?" inquired Mr. Blizzard.

"It is true. But—but I don't often go that way," and he nodded down the passage in which the explorers had seen the light flash.

"We must go on, and see if they are safe," said Dan, eagerly. "You show us the way, will you, please?"

But the stranger held back. He stammered, and seemed confused. Suddenly Mr. Blizzard caught him by the left hand—the hand that was gloved.

"What's the matter with this?" he demanded, before the fellow could pull away. "Why do you keep it covered? What's the matter with you, anyway?"

The strange man fell back against the rock wall of the tunnel, panting, and glaring at the newspaper man in evident fear.

"You're not Asa Craig!" cried the newspaper

man, earnestly. "I don't understand it. I don't know how you come to be here when you're supposed to be in a cell at Meadville prison; but I'd say that you are Fred Gedney!"

"Ee-yow!" yelled Billy, grabbing Dan by the arm. "Do you hear *that*?"

"Asa Craig wore a beard, and you are trying to raise one like his," continued Mr. Blizzard, intent on piecing the mystery together, but having no idea in his mind that the boys were working out a mystery of their own as well!

"It was whispered around that you made a break from jail, Gedney—a very clever break. But McDow said he captured you in the river. *Was it your cousin he captured?*"

"You two are alike—it's true. But how about that scar on your hand? Did Asa Craig scar his hand in the same way so that he could be mistaken for you, and be captured in your stead? I don't understand it——"

"That's exactly what it is," cried Billy, eagerly. "Dan and I saved Mr. Craig from the river the day we raced the *Crow Flight* in the *Red Arrow*. And the warden's launch was by and he came and took Mr. Craig away with him. It was a put up job. I told you so, Dannie, and you wouldn't believe me!"

"But, for a man to deliberately go to a cell for another," gasped the amazed Dan.

"That's what I don't understand," rejoined Mr. Blizzard. "What does it mean, Fred? Tell us. Make up your mind that you cannot hide your identity. You don't look enough like Asa with a beard on to ever be taken for him, however much he may look like you with his face shaven."

The barefooted man groaned aloud:

"The game's up, I guess," he said, hoarsely. "I tried to carry out my part of the bargain. I did not know for sure that Asa had been taken. And I had no means of leaving the island——"

"How did you get here?" demanded Mr. Blizzard, quickly.

"In a cat-boat. She was wrecked on the rocks in a little blow the day after I landed."

"But why did you come to this forsaken place?"

"That—that's partly Asa's secret," said the miserable man.

"His submarine!" ejaculated Blizzard. "I guess this is the place he hid away to work on it."

The other nodded. "I found provisions enough here, but my clothing was aboard my boat. Everything was swept away. I have been shoeless, and almost unclothed—and very miserable because I could not get to the mainland and learn anything about my cousin, or my family."

At that moment there was an echoing shout from down the tunnel. A ringing voice cried:

"Ahoy! Ahoy! This way! Castaways of the *Orville*! This way!"

The man of the cavern leaped aside as though to run; but Mr. Blizzard grabbed him.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "We want to know more about this, Fred."

"I don't want to see those people. I was mad to speak to you three. I musn't betray poor old Asa's invention. I've done him enough harm already."

"You have my word," said Blizzard, quickly, "that I will not betray you, or him, or your business here. The boys——"

"We pass our word to you, Mr. Gedney," said Dan. "We'll keep your secret. And we'd be mighty ungrateful fellows to do or say anything to injure Mr. Craig when he has been so kind as to give us the use of his launch."

"They're coming!" exclaimed Gedney, as footsteps sounded on the rock, and a light appeared.

"All right. We'll let you go," said Mr. Blizzard. "But you must promise to let us talk with you again before we go away with these people from the steamer."

"Agreed!" exclaimed Gedney. "This tunnel is a straight passage to the place where you moored the *Red Arrow*. Had you turned to the

south, instead of to the north, when you looked for a passage through to this side of the island, you would have come upon the other end of this tunnel. I'll see you later!"

He whispered this, and darted away in the darkness of the side passage by which he had appeared. Dan and Billy were already shouting to the persons down the cavern. All three now ran forward.

"Are you alive?" yelled Mr. Blizzard. "Are you all right? How many are there of you?"

"Oh, that's Jim Blizzard of the *Star*!" cried the voice of Mr. Parker. "He must have come out to find us."

"Thank these boys here more than me, Parker," answered the journalist. "It was their belief, and their boat, and their pluck that brought us to Wild Man's Island."

The trio had reached a fairly good-sized room in the cavern; and here the crowd of rather forlorn-looking castaways were gathered. Dan was suddenly hugged tight around the neck by Mildred Kent, while Billy and the red-haired Miss Lettie were shaking hands with vigor.

"Oh, Dannie! I hoped you would come to look for us," cried Mildred. "Poor papa and mamma——"

"Were taken off the steamer by the *Elesmere* and carried to New York. Everybody you left

on the sinking steamer was saved," declared Dan.

"And all in our two boats were saved—thirty-eight souls," cried Mildred. "One boat sprang a leak, but we took the crew and passengers into our boat and we all got through into the cove. The cabin is burned down, Dannie."

"Yes, I know," said Dan.

"And so we hunted for these caves and got in this one. Can you get us home, Dannie? I don't want to go to the Bermudas any more."

"I'll never go myself until I can ride there in an ox-cart!" exclaimed the vivacious Miss Parker. "Billy, you *are* some good, after all—and the *Red Arrow*, too. Can you take us off in her?"

"When the gale and sea goes down," promised Dan.

"Meanwhile we'll starve to death!" cried Lettie, dramatically.

"No. Billy and I are going back to the boat at once. One of the seamen can go with us. We've got a basket of provisions that mother put up, and we'll bring Mr. Craig's alcohol lamp and the coffee pot. Let one of the other men go for water at the spring behind the burned cabin. There's a perfectly good bucket still lashed in the boat you came ashore in. I saw it there, Mildred," he added, "along with your best hat."

Meanwhile all the others had been talking just

as fast as they could, and Mr. Blizzard was much interested in taking notes for his paper of the *Orville* disaster, and the adventures of the castaways. The Speedwells left him here while they went through the tunnel (as Gedney had instructed them) and found the *Red Arrow*.

The castaways seemed to have no suspicion that there was, or had been, any other human being in the caves before the rescue party arrived, save themselves. Gedney had managed to keep out of their sight.

But while the hungry castaways were partaking of the food and warm drink the Speedwells had supplied, Dan and Billy, with the newspaper man, met the escaped prisoner as he had promised, and learned at first hand the whole mystery, and a very interesting story it proved to be.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE MYSTERY CLEARED UP

GEDNEY, the escaped prisoner, met the Speedwells and the journalist on the ledge near which the *Red Arrow* was moored and took them into a small cave, which seemed fitted up as a sort of bedroom and office.

"These are Asa's diggings," he said. "He has occupied the cavern off and on for some years—before I met with that awful accident that put me in the Meadville prison."

"I don't know as we any of us quite got the rights of that terrible affair, Fred," said Mr. Blizzard, kindly. "Of course, you had no business to break jail, and we are compounding a felony if we let you escape without telling the facts to the police; but I have always felt that you were sacrificed to the vengeance of the friends of the people who lost their lives in the fire."

"It is true. It was an awful thing," said Gedney, in a shaking voice. "But I declare I was not guilty. There was a tailor shop over my rooms—a sweat-shop. I had seen them carrying

naphtha up there and I had smelt it. They used it for sponging the second-hand garments they made over, or repaired. The fire started there, I believe, rather than in my flat. I had nothing explosive, or that would spread fire, in my possession. But I had purchased very explosive chemicals just previous to the fire, for Asa's use down here. The tailor and his family and his lodgers were all burned to death. Therefore I was the sacrifice."

"And you could not disprove the district attorney's theory?"

"No. Besides, I did not want to tell what I did with the explosives. You know, Asa has been working over this boat of his for a long, long time. Once the invention in an incompleated state was stolen from him, but he got it back. We thought that down here on Wild Man's Island nobody would ever be able to find it, or his workshop. The cavern in which the boat lies at this moment has but one entrance, and that is so well hidden that you couldn't find it. When Asa completes the boat he will have to blow out the side of the cavern to let the sea in, and so float his craft. That is why we bought the explosives.

"He wanted to tell all this at the trial. I could not see that it would save me. I could not prove that I did not bring a part of the chemicals to the flat I occupied in the building that was

burned. But Asa, poor fellow, felt that he was in some measure to blame for my misfortune. He is doing all he can to try and get me released——”

“And you are released right now!” ejaculated Mr. Blizzard.

“I mean legally.”

“But you’ve spoiled your chance by making this break for liberty. And these boys say that your cousin has taken your place.”

“I am coming to that,” said Gedney. “I suppose it was a desperate plan we made up between us. But I believed that if Asa worked it as he said he would, we’d have the warden in such a hole that he’d be bound to help us.”

“McDow? Explain, please,” said Mr. Blizzard.

“You see, a year after I was sent to Meadville, Asa got in a mess down here. He is a master-mind in mechanics, beside me,” said Fred Gedney, modestly; “but sometimes he has got stuck and I have managed to help him. He was at one of those places. When he came to see me up to Meadville he told me about it.”

“If I was down there on the island I believe I could fix it for you,” I said.

“He jumped at the idea my words suggested. It was his plan, and he insisted on it. I did not think he could carry it through. I had already

burned my hand," and Gedney stripped off the glove he wore and showed the mark of the horse-shoe on the back of his left hand. "I made a tracing of it and secretly gave it to Asa. The plucky fellow burned his own hand in exactly the same way.

"We knew we looked alike when we were both shaven. I believe that my beard, properly trimmed, will make me look like Asa. I had already mapped out a way of leaving the prison—and I won't tell you how I did it, for it is not my secret entirely, being suggested to me by another prisoner.

"Asa came to see me, off and on, till all things were ready. Then one day I signalled him as he passed the prison wall where I was at work, that in three days time I would be free."

"We were with him in the *Red Arrow*!" exclaimed Dan, eagerly. "I *knew* you two signalled back and forth."

"And he at once disappeared," said Gedney. "Or, so I suppose, I have not seen him. He was to remain about the river, but not in his launch, with his beard shaven, until the hue and cry after me died down. Or, if he was captured, he was not to declare his identity until they had shut him up in my place. Then, ten to one, it would take some time for him to prove his statement.

"Meanwhile I was going to have plenty of

time to get down here. If I could help him in his work, I was to do so (and I have done that) and after my beard grew I was to appear on the mainland under his name. I could even see my poor wife and my little boy, in the guise of Asa.

"But, as I tell you, my boat was wrecked the very night I came here. I have lived a most miserable life—worse than that in prison—all these months.

"Once, in mid-winter, a party of young folks came here in launches and lived in the cabin. I burned that down after they went so that no other parties would be attracted to the island," said Gedney. "And I want to beg you—all three—to keep my secret and Asa Craig's secret. Help me to get back to the mainland, and I will communicate with Asa in prison and we will make our plans to exchange places again——"

"You must do nothing of the kind!" cried Mr. Blizzard. "I can see a better way out of the whole difficulty than that."

"What do you mean?" gasped the escaped prisoner. "I cannot let poor old Asa remain there in my place longer."

"If you keep still, things will work out all right so that he will be pardoned in your name," cried Blizzard. "Your friends were keeping it very quiet; but pressure has been brought to bear on the district attorney who convicted you. A

witness that perjured himself has been brought to tell the truth on his deathbed. He was the witness that denied he sold the tailor up stairs above your laboratory the naphtha. The district attorney has headed the petition for your release. Better let the matter stand as it is. Let Asa Craig be pardoned in your name and you two can change identities afterward. If you have been able to help him on his submarine invention he will not mind his incarceration in your stead."

"I have helped him!" cried Gedney, joyfully. "I have solved the final problem for him. When Asa comes back here he can blow out his wall and float the craft."

Which Mr. Craig finally did, as is told in the following volume of this series, together with many adventures of the Speedwell boys and their friends, which book is entitled: "*The Speedwell Boys in a Submarine; Or, The Lost Treasure of Rocky Cove.*"

Meanwhile Dan and Billy, with Mr. Blizzard, led the party of castaways from the sunken *Orville*, through the tunnel in the island to the place where their launch was moored. Before night the wind had ceased and the sea went down to such a degree that one of the big tugs ran out from behind the breakwater and appeared off the island. Dan and Billy transported most of the castaways from the island to the tug in the little

launch, making two trips of it; but the Parkers and Mildred Kent preferred to voyage back to Riverdale on the *Red Arrow* with our heroes.

The trip home was a memorable one. The castaways were thankful indeed that they had been saved from the sea; and they could not praise Dan and Billy Speedwell enough for the pluck and courage they had shown in going to the rescue of the shipwrecked party.

Mr. Blizzard saw that the story of the adventure, as printed in the *Star*, lost nothing in praise of the brothers. Billy said he was almost ashamed to meet people on the street.

"By crickery, Dan!" he exclaimed, "they'll think we've hired a press agent."

But the girls, and their parents, were heartily grateful to Dan and Billy and showed in more than one way their appreciation of what the Speedwells had done for them. The members of the Colasha Boat Club took the matter up, too. Through the efforts of Colonel Culpepper, the commodore, and Mr. Stevens and Mr. Stetson, the Speedwells were presented with a ten years' membership in the club. The Averys of course fought this proceeding; but they were over-ridden.

Besides, Chanceford Avery was "singing pretty small," as Jim Stetson said, these days. Many of the members of both the boat club and

the Outing Club would have nothing to do with him, and when the annual election of the Riverdale Outing Club came around, Chance Avery was retired from the captaincy of the club and Dan Speedwell was elected in his stead, while Billy was made a vice-captain.

The thing that most delighted the Speedwell boys, however, happened after Mr. Craig appeared again in Riverdale. The secret, known to the boys and the newspaper editor only, besides Craig and Gedney themselves, was not betrayed. Officially Fred Gedney was pardoned by the governor; actually Asa Craig came out of the Meadville prison, and disappeared until his beard was grown again.

He came to see the boys then. He told them that he had bribed a keeper to take out the letter to the executive committee of the boat club on New Year's eve, which letter had enabled the *Red Arrow* to be raced in the regatta; and this keeper delivered the letter aboard the *Red Arrow* from the warden's own launch!

Mr. Craig seemed to feel that he owed the brothers something, too. When he went back to his island retreat he presented Dan and Billy with a bill of sale of the *Red Arrow*.

"It's yours boys—you love her, I know, and it would be a shame to part you from the power launch after you have run her so long. If I ever

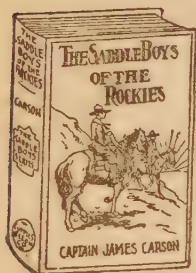
want your help and her help, I shall feel at liberty to call on you. But in the meantime, the *Red Arrow* belongs to the Speedwell Boys—long may they delight in sailing her! ”

THE END

# THE BOYS' OUTING LIBRARY

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Jacket in full color.

Price, per volume, 60 cents, postpaid.



## THE SADDLE BOYS SERIES

By CAPT. JAMES CARSON

The Saddle Boys of the Rockies  
The Saddle Boys in the Grand Canyon  
The Saddle Boys on the Plains  
The Saddle Boys at Circle Ranch  
The Saddle Boys on Mexican Trails

## THE DAVE DASHAWAY SERIES

By ROY ROCKWOOD

Dave Dashaway the Young Aviator  
Dave Dashaway and His Hydroplane  
Dave Dashaway and His Giant Airship  
Dave Dashaway Around the World  
Dave Dashaway: Air Champion

## THE SPEEDWELL BOYS SERIES

By ROY ROCKWOOD

The Speedwell Boys on Motorcycles  
The Speedwell Boys and Their Racing Auto  
The Speedwell Boys and Their Power Launch  
The Speedwell Boys in a Submarine  
The Speedwell Boys and Their Ice Racer

## THE TOM FAIRFIELD SERIES

By ALLEN CHAPMAN

|                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Tom Fairfield's School Days  | Tom Fairfield in Camp          |
| Tom Fairfield at Sea         | Tom Fairfield's Pluck and Luck |
| Tom Fairfield's Hunting Trip |                                |

## THE FRED FENTON ATHLETIC SERIES

By ALLEN CHAPMAN

|                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fred Fenton the Pitcher      | Fred Fenton on the Crew  |
| Fred Fenton in the Line      | Fred Fenton on the Track |
| Fred Fenton: Marathon Runner |                          |

Send For Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.

---

GUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers

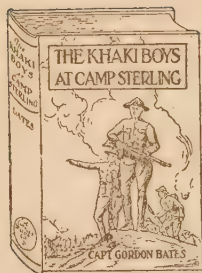
New York

# THE KHAKI BOYS SERIES

By CAPT. GORDON BATES

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated. Jacket in full color.

Price per volume, 60 cents, postpaid.



All who love the experiences and adventures of our American boys, fighting for the freedom of democracy in the world, will be delighted with these vivid and true-to-life stories of the camp and field in the great war.

## THE KHAKI BOYS AT CAMP STERLING

*or Training for the Big Fight in France*

Two zealous young patriots volunteer and begin their military training. On the train going to camp they meet two rookies with whom they become chums. Together they get into a baffling camp mystery that develops into an extraordinary spy-plot. They defeat the enemies of their country and incidentally help one another to promotion both in friendship and service.

## THE KHAKI BOYS ON THE WAY

*or Doing Their Bit on Sea and Land.*

Our soldier boys having completed their training at Camp Sterling are transferred to a Southern cantonment from which they are finally sent aboard a troop-ship for France. On the trip their ship is sunk by a U-boat and their adventures are realistic descriptions of the tragedies of the sea.

## THE KHAKI BOYS AT THE FRONT

*or Shoulder to Shoulder in the Trenches*

The Khaki Boys reach France, and, after some intensive training in sound of the battle front, are sent into the trenches. In the raids across No-Man's land, they have numerous tragic adventures that show what great work is being performed by our soldiers. It shows what makes heroes.

*Send For Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.*

---

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers

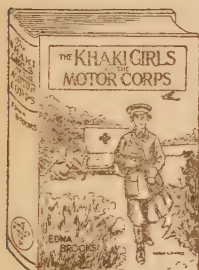
New York

# THE KHAKI GIRLS SERIES

By EDNA BROOKS

12mo. Cloth. Illustrated.. Jacket in full colors.

Price per volume, 60 cents, postpaid.



When Uncle Sam sent forth the ringing call, "I need you!" it was not alone his strong young sons who responded. All over the United States capable American girls stood ready to offer their services to their country. How two young girls donned the khaki and made good in the Motor Corps, an organization for women developed by the Great War, forms a series of stories of signal novelty and vivid interest and action.

## THE KHAKI GIRLS OF THE MOTOR CORPS

*or Finding Their Place in the Big War*

Joan Mason, an enthusiastic motor girl, and Valerie Warde, a society debutante, meet at an automobile show. Next day they go together to the Motor Corps headquarters and in due time are accepted and become members of the Corps, in the service of the United States. The two girl drivers find motoring for Uncle Sam a most exciting business. Incidentally they are instrumental in rendering valuable service to the United States government by discovering and running down a secret organization of its enemies.

## THE KHAKI GIRLS BEHIND THE LINES

*or Driving with the Ambulance Corps*

As a result of their splendid work in the Motor Corps, the Khaki Girls receive the honor of an opportunity to drive with the Ambulance Corps in France. After a most eventful and hazardous crossing of the Atlantic, they arrive in France and are assigned to a station behind the lines. Constantly within range of enemy shrapnel, out in all kinds of weather, tearing over shell-torn roads and dodging Boche patrols, all go to make up the day's work, and bring them many exciting adventures.

*Send For Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.*

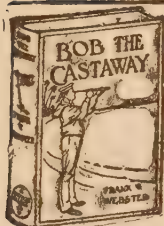
---

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers

New York

# THE WEBSTER SERIES

By FRANK V. WEBSTER



Mr. WEBSTER'S style is very much like that of the boys' favorite author, the late lamented Horatio Alger, Jr., but his tales are thoroughly up-to-date.

Cloth. 12mo. Over 200 pages each. Illustrated. Stamped in various colors.

Price per volume, 60 cents, postpaid.

**Only A Farm Boy**  
*or Dan Hardy's Rise in Life*

**The Boy From The Ranch**  
*or Roy Bradner's City Experiences*

**The Young Treasure Hunter**  
*or Fred Stanley's Trip to Alaska*

**The Boy Pilot of the Lakes**  
*or Nat Morton's Perils*

**Tom The Telephone Boy**  
*or The Mystery of a Message*

**Bob The Castaway**  
*or The Wreck of the Eagle*

**The Newsboy Partners**  
*or Who Was Dick Box?*

**Two Boy Gold Miners**  
*or Lost in the Mountains*

**The Young Firemen of Lakeville**  
*or Herbert Dare's Pluck*

**The Boys of Bellwood School**  
*or Frank Jordan's Triumph*

**Jack the Runaway**  
*or On the Road with a Circus*

**Bob Chester's Grit**  
*or From Ranch to Riches*

**Airship Andy**  
*or The Luck of a Brave Boy*

**High School Rivals**  
*or Fred Markham's Struggles*

**Darry The Life Saver**  
*or The Heroes of the Coast*

**Dick The Bank Boy**  
*or A Missing Fortune*

**Ben Hardy's Flying Machine**  
*or Making a Record for Himself*

**Harry Watson's High School Days**  
*or The Rivals of Rivertown*

**Comrades of the Saddle**  
*or The Young Rough Riders of the Plains*

**Tom Taylor at West Point**  
*or The Old Army Officer's Secret*

**The Boy Scouts of Lennox**  
*or Hiking Over Big Bear Mountain*

**The Boys of the Wireless**  
*or A Stirring Rescue from the Deep*

**Cowboy Dave**  
*or The Round-up at Rolling River*

**Jack of the Pony Express**  
*or The Young Rider of the Mountain Trail*

**The Boys of the Battleship**  
*or For the Honor of Uncle Sam*

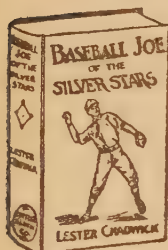
CUPPLES & LEON CO., Publishers,

NEW YORK

# THE BASEBALL JOE SERIES

BY LESTER CHADWICK

12mo. Illustrated. Price per volume, 80 cents, postpaid.



## BASEBALL JOE OF THE SILVER STARS *or The Rivals of Riverside*

Joe is an everyday country boy who loves to play baseball and particularly to pitch.

## BASEBALL JOE ON THE SCHOOL NINE *or Pitching for the Blue Banner*

Joe's great ambition was to go to boarding school and play on the school team.

## BASEBALL JOE AT YALE

*or Pitching for the College Championship*

Joe goes to Yale University. In his second year he becomes a varsity pitcher and pitches in several big games.

## BASEBALL JOE IN THE CENTRAL LEAGUE

*or Making Good as a Professional Pitcher*

In this volume the scene of action is shifted from Yale college to a baseball league of our central states.

## BASEBALL JOE IN THE BIG LEAGUE

*or A Young Pitcher's Hardest Struggles*

From the Central League Joe is drafted into the St. Louis Nationals. A corking baseball story all fans will enjoy.

## BASEBALL JOE ON THE GIANTS

*or Making Good as a Twirler in the Metropolis*

How Joe was traded to the Giants and became their mainstay in the box makes an interesting baseball story.

## BASEBALL JOE IN THE WORLD SERIES

*or Pitching for the Championship*

The rivalry was of course of the keenest, and what Joe did to win the series is told in a manner to thrill the most jaded reader.

## BASEBALL JOE AROUND THE WORLD

*or Pitching on a Grand Tour*

The Giants and the All-Americans tour the world, playing in many foreign countries.

*Send For Our Free Illustrated Catalogue.*

---

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY, Publishers

New York

# THE DOROTHY DALE SERIES

By MARGARET PENROSE

Author of "The Motor Girls Series"

12mo. Illustrated. Price per volume, 80 cents, postpaid.



Dorothy Dale is the daughter of an old Civil War veteran who is running a weekly newspaper in a small Eastern town. Her sunny disposition, her fun-loving ways and her trials and triumphs make clean, interesting and fascinating reading. The Dorothy Dale Series is one of the most popular series of books for girls ever published.

DOROTHY DALE: A GIRL OF TO-DAY

DOROTHY DALE AT GLENWOOD SCHOOL

DOROTHY DALE'S GREAT SECRET

DOROTHY DALE AND HER CHUMS

DOROTHY DALE'S QUEER HOLIDAYS

DOROTHY DALE'S CAMPING DAYS

DOROTHY DALE'S SCHOOL RIVALS

DOROTHY DALE IN THE CITY

DOROTHY DALE'S PROMISE

DOROTHY DALE IN THE WEST

DOROTHY DALE'S STRANGE DISCOVERY

DOROTHY DALE'S ENGAGEMENT

SUPPLES & LEON CO., Publishers,

NEW YORK







